

PlayStation 3 PSN PSV PSP 演劇端末

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ISSUE NO **212**
INTER GALACTIC PLANETARY



EXCLUSIVE

RESIDENT EVIL

Operation Raccoon City heats up

IN-DEPTH

FINAL FANTASY

Why the HD remake is essential

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Welcome **PLAY**

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine



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BioWare talks RPG controversy

It's all so quiet



Let me set the scene for you as things stand right now, here on **Play**. It's deadline day. We've only just

finished arguing about the scores. We're tired. We're stressed. Dan keeps telling Andy to shut up. We're telling everyone in the nearby office kitchen to shut up. We're telling people who are quiet to shut up in case they start talking, so we don't then have to tell them to shut up.

But by JOVE has it been worth it. You'll notice the reviews section is absolutely crammed this month – *Modern Warfare 3*, *Battlefield 3*, *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, *Assassin's Creed Revelations* and *The Sims 3: Pets*! Yes, we managed to sneak that in, too. You lucky people, we know.

Because we like making things harder for ourselves, we decided to write a feature about the 100 best games still to come on PlayStation 3, which includes monster looks at *Grand Theft Auto V* to kick off the feature and *Mass Effect 3* to end it.

Whether you're an FPS addict, RPG nut or find your gaming tastes change more often than a girl in Topshop, there's something in this issue that will grab you. Enjoy it, too. The way this deadline is going, we'll probably come to blows soon. If we've gone suspiciously quiet on Facebook or Twitter, you'll know why. Send the police. And body bags. Enjoy the issue.

Rking

Editor

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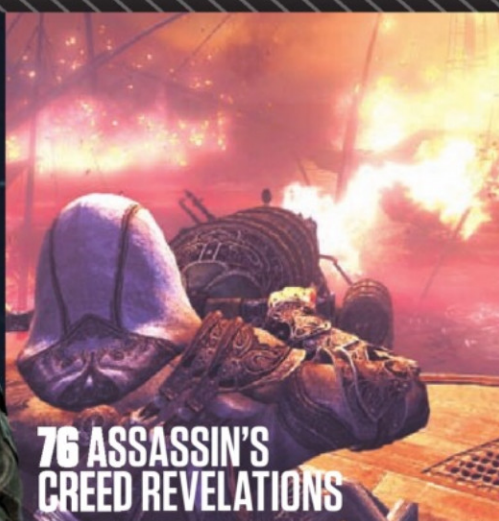
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Your gateway to the esoteric world of PlayStation



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Does it live up to the hype?



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72 CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 3 PS3

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Still the only game ballsy enough to feature a character called Desmond.

80 THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM PS3

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84 BATTLEFIELD 3 PS3

An abysmal single-player mode but amazing multiplayer. Game of two halves?

88 UNCHARTED 3: DRAKE'S DECEPTION PS3

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Everybody's Super Sonic racing, try to keep your feet right on the ground...

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hi-def content

How to watch the delicious high-definition content included free on your Play DVD...

STEP ONE

Open DVD and navigate to *On the Play DVD-ROM*

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Click where it says *Click here to open DVD-ROM folder*

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Just double-click the trailer you want to watch!

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Exactly 10 things you should know about the portable.

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The Caped Crusader checks into **Play**'s clinic.

INSTALL

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth



10 things you should know about

1 Keep your old UMDs

Just because the future is here, it doesn't mean you need to start frisbeeing your old UMDs out the window. Sony is looking into a system that would essentially convert your old UMDs into digital downloads for PS Vita. The message from Sony on this hasn't been too clear but until it comes forward and clarifies, hang onto those UMDs.

2 PS Vita beats mobile gaming

John Coller, Sony's director of hardware marketing, reckons PS Vita has what it takes to tackle the mobile market. "The mobile market in the United States offers consumers extremely light gaming options," he says. "We developed PS Vita after observing a significant addressable market that demands rich, deep handheld gaming."

3 Hardware box revealed

Look to the right of the PS Vita above. It's the box! The box for PS Vita! It has everything that we Europeans share love for despite our many cultural differences – tilted photography, swathes of blue and the slight fragrance of caramel waffles. Well, okay, one of those things is more of a hope than anything official.

4 Vita game box revealed

Look to the right of the PS Vita above. It's the box! The box for PS Vita games! It has... oh wait. It has Japanese writing. That will change, as will the artwork. We reckon Drake's face will be bigger and he will also have a gun. That's what Western audiences want! Guns! And big faces! For reference, it's slightly smaller than a Blu-ray box.

5 PS Vita 20MB limit

At least in Japan, PS Vita will be limited to 20MB downloads when using 3G. That's a limit which could be raised in future but right now, it means PS Vita falls in line with iPhone 3G capabilities. It's not enough to download PSP and PS Vita titles without a Wi-Fi connection, then, although that limit could be changed for the European release.

Need To Know IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS



Battlefield 3 sells millions and millions!

And millions and millions and millions! We didn't have room to put all that in the headline but it would have shown that *Battlefield 3* sold 5 million copies in its first week, which is more than the previous 17 *Battlefield* games did in their first week combined. Woah.



Mega Man due for Ultimate MVC 3?

Given how much Capcom likes pointless DLC, fan favourite Mega Man could be due for a later appearance in *UMVC 3*. The clue? A poster in one of the stages showing various characters slain or captured... except for Mega Man, who isn't labelled as either. Hmmm.



Resident Evil Chronicles becomes PS3 exclusive

Remember *Umbrella Chronicles* and *Darkside Chronicles*? The on-rail shooters that appeared on Wii? They're now coming to PS3, packaged together, in HD and compatible with Move. No release date yet but hey, it's another exclusive, so good news, right?



6 EU release date confirmed

It's 22 February! Which means it's still three to four months away depending on when you read this mag. Or perhaps only two months, if you were late. Or maybe it was released five months ago if you're a mother cleaning your son's bedroom and reading an old issue. In which case, what are you doing? Get down to the shops! Quick!

7 PSP games 're-Vita-lised'

Shuhei Yoshida, boss of Sony Computer Entertainment Worldwide Studios, has confirmed that emulated PSP titles will allow Vita users to remap controls onto the right analogue stick. "We will provide options to remap the control from either face buttons or the action buttons to right analogue stick," he explained.

8 External battery option

If the battery life of the PS Vita concerns you – it's currently at three to five hours – there will be an external battery peripheral made available. "So if you're flying from New York to San Francisco, you have no concerns if you have an additional external battery," said Yoshida. What about the 9.05 from Bournemouth to London, though?

9 PS Vita is Region Free

Waiting is a real drag – which is probably why post offices up and down the country are closing down – so you may want your PS Vita ahead of its finally-confirmed-but-still-too-far-away-date-of-February 2012 release date over here. Good news, then – PS Vita has been confirmed to be Region Free. So you can import it from Japan. Yes.

10 Vita games are expensive

PS Vita's flagship title, *Uncharted: Golden Abyss*, will cost ¥5,980 for the cartridge and ¥4,900 for the downloadable version when launched in Japan. That works out to be £50 and £40, respectively. Too expensive? The jury is out and *Play* readers had mixed reactions but remember that games are more expensive in Japan.

INSTALL

YOUR SHOUT

FINAL FANTASY XIII-2

1. @PROTAG22

I take offence at the use of Roman numerals and standard numbers in one title. I also take offence at *Final Fantasy* in general.

2. @PEDDYV

Not being funny, but shouldn't '*Final Fantasy*' have ended with the first one? It's clearly not 'final' if there's a sequel lol

3. @HELLO_CAMO

The stupid paradigm system makes me feel like I'm on the verge of having an epileptic seizure. I hate it.

4. @JPICKARD12

Square seem to hold this ten-year-old view of QTEs, in that they will immerse us in *FFXIII-2*'s cinematics. It's a desperate move.

5. @JOSHUBUH

Easy fix: include with *XIII-2* a copy of *XIII* with the gameplay of *XII*

twitterwatch

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More and more I look at *XIII-2*'s trailers and the new features, the original *XIII* looks more and more like unfinished *FF* game lol
GIGASTRAWBERRYMILK

Looks a little cheeseball wouldn't you say?
INNOVATIONDNB

These stupid haters! I swear *Mass Effect* is a blood game, *Final Fantasy* is a philosophical game filled with fun, while *Mass Effect* is in other words shoot, shoot and more shoot, tell me which one is better? Haters 2% will say *Mass Effect*, intelligent people 98% will say *FFXIII-2* and *Versus*.
THEFINAL360

facebook .com/playmagazineuk

Col Carney Hope's balls dropped... Nuff' said

Conor Garratt I was a bit too young for the original ones, and I missed out *XIII* due to poor reviews. If it's good I'll look into getting it, but I'll probably get *Final Fantasy X* for the Vita instead - I feel ashamed about being a gamer who's never played *FF*.

John Tudor They should have stopped *Final Fantasy* at *VII* to be honest.

Tony Watson I played through hours of boredom in *XIII* hoping the game would become classic *Final Fantasy*. Maybe *XIII-2* will repair my broken dreams (I got the Plat though!)

INSTANT EXPERT

All of the pros with none of the prose

LIKE A SORE THUMB

In a world of seeming ubiquity, *The Last Guardian* stands out simply by being that bit different to pretty much everything else. Uniqueness doesn't automatically mean brilliance, obviously, so it's good that we're confident in both the game's ability to stand out and its potential quality.

IN A NAME: WHAT'S

Some say he's called Trico, but we've come up with our own name for the giant cat-bird thing: Clive. And we already know (without knowing for a fact) there's likely to be a bit in the game that makes us cry about Clive.

IT'S ALL RELATIVE

While this is the third game from Team Ico and shares many aesthetic similarities with the studio's previous games, it is not a sequel. In fact, if the words we've heard are to be believed, it's not even related to the two prior titles.

twitterwatch



@amemeyer

"I love how my mom got an email from PSN to redeem her #uncharted3 Beta rewards. Had no clue she played in the Beta. so awesome."

@PlayMag_UK says: Naughty Dog's family get stuck into Drake's adventures. Wonder how she found the aiming?

TIME TO GO

Originally set for a release in 2011 – apparently – the game was pushed back to an unspecified point in 2012. While this is naturally cause for us all to cry real, open, wailing tears, it also means we can rest easy knowing nothing is being rushed.

DP(E)

Normally we'd only go slightly mental about things like dedicated physics engines, but the DPE (as the cool kids call it) in *The Last Guardian* looks to be an interesting prospect. Why? Because it means the big floppy cat-bird thing will be more realistic in its big floppiness.

UNPREDICTABLY PREDICTABLE

Team Ico is aiming for level design in *The Last Guardian* to be 'unpredictable', not falling into the usual traps that other games do so readily. What does this mean? We don't know – it's too difficult to predict.

HUDS UP

Whether or not *The Last Guardian* will have a HUD visible on screen is still something being 'anguished' over, according to Team Ico. Is this an important point? Well stylistically, yes – subtlety is key to the studio's games, so... no MW3-style HUD please.

TREAT 'EM MEAN

Trico/Clive, the cat-bird creature, isn't just a blind, unblinking vessel through which you accomplish your usual gaming goals. No, you need to earn the trust of this massive CUTIE PIE by treating it well. We doubt this will involve much Move-based grooming, though.

THE LAST GUARDIAN

Developer Team Ico
Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment • ETA 2012

QUESTION: IS SYNDICATE STILL RELEVANT?



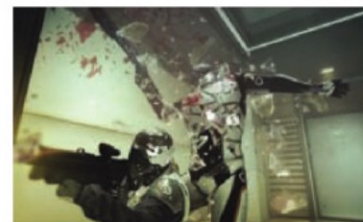
A reboot of a series that hasn't been seen in the wild since 1997 on the original PlayStation, made as a completely different type of game to the first two and released in a time where modern day and near-future settings are ten a penny... why would you bother? Does *Syndicate* still matter today? Can it compete with the big guns? Was it even necessary for it to be a *Syndicate* game?



Syndicate – the 2012 version – has a lot of obstacles to overcome if it wants to be received warmly. First, it has to compete with a fervent gang of fanboys who never shut up about how brilliant the originals were (even though they had dodgy pathfinding and don't hold up to modern scrutiny). They won't be happy regardless of anything, so it's going to be hard to keep their rage quiet.



Second, it looks – at first glance – very similar to a lot of modern shooters. It's an FPS, it's futuristic like *Deus Ex*. It's violent and cool and realistic-looking and blah-de-blah. *Syndicate* risks blending in a bit too much. There's a lot to be said for appealing to the masses, but there's less to be said for nobody paying attention in the first place.

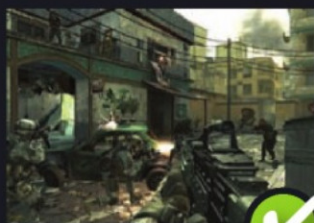


But there's an ace up EA's sleeve in the shape of Starbreeze. It could still mess it up – it's not the studio we all knew and loved six years ago – but there's clearly still enough going on at the studio to make *Syndicate* still matter; to make sure it's still relevant.

Answer: Yes, it is. But it could still go wrong.

DOS & DON'TS

Important lessons from Play this month



DO: Turn your brain off and enjoy everything Activision's *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* has to offer – it's worth it



DON'T: Put too much stock in *Battlefield 3*'s single-player mode. Online is where the class – and massive fun – really is.



DO: Read our massive 100 games feature, because it took us ages to get sorted and caused a fair few headaches.



DON'T: Expect *Assassin's Creed Revelations* to make any huge strides for the series, as fun and polished as it may be.

Read our reviews of all these games starting on page 71



Skyrim's the limit

We sit down with Skyrim art director Matt Carofano to talk about Skyrim, Fallout 3, DLC and the new console cycle

Many people are surprised that the leap between games, visually if nothing else, is huge. Was this also an aim when it came to Skyrim?

We want people to realise that there is a big leap but, of course, this is now our third game with *Oblivion* and *Fallout 3* so we've learned a lot about how to use the hardware. We rewrote everything in the game and that allowed us to add a load of new features and customise it to what we can get out of the console. We can draw further distances with more content, shadows, new animation system. All of that.

So how much did *Fallout 3* help in making these strides?

Fallout 3 helped quite a bit but a lot of stuff was also written between *Fallout 3* and *Skyrim* and a lot made specifically for *Skyrim*. It's really a big difference.

Many are touting this as the *Elder Scrolls* game to reach a whole new audience. Is that something you have to be aware of and plan for?

Kind of. There are a couple of things we've done to make it a little easier to play, like what we've done with levelling up. You can play any skill you want and if you don't like it then you can just go and try something new. Before, if you started down a certain path and if you didn't like it you had to start a new character so now we want to give the player more freedom and let them play the way they want to play. That's more fun. We've tried to give them more direction, too. We point them to quests more, we make more paths to all dungeons and just lead them to the content a little bit better. It makes it a little easier to play as you can play it how you want and just find things better.

We don't go into it trying to make it more appealing to a much larger audience. What we realise is happening is that our games are popular so *Fallout 3* has made the hype for *Skyrim* more because a lot of people have played *Fallout 3*. It doesn't mean we design the game to be more accessible, though. We try and put as many crazy things in as possible and make the best game we can.

Most of your projects are greeted with a 'is there multiplayer this time' discussion. Did you ever plan to include multiplayer in *Skyrim* and would you ever in the future?

I think we usually talk about some multiplayer component every time we look at making a new game but we've decided that, you know, we want to make the ultimate single-player experience as we think that would be the most fun game and what we really like making. Ultimately we look at that stuff every time but a single-player game is what we want to do.

What measures have you taken this time around to ensure there's less bugs in *Skyrim*?

We've started play-testing the game much earlier and the entire team tests the whole game and we're dedicated to getting rid of as many bugs as we can. At the same time we realise it's a huge open world and there's almost an infinite number of situations you can get into so there's going to be some stuff we wished we could've fixed but we'll be very dedicated to making sure it's the best it can possibly be.

You've always supported your games with DLC long after launch. What are your DLC plans for *Skyrim*?

We want to support *Skyrim* for much longer than we have in other games. We're going to be working on DLC coming up pretty soon. We haven't decided what it's going to be yet but we're excited about it and we can also let everyone use our editor, the creation kit, to make their own content and share it with friends.

Finally, what's your take on when we'll see new hardware?

I don't know. I think it's a little too early to say. We've been really happy with how our new engine has worked on the current generation of consoles and we sort of feel now we're at the end of the project we've just got to the best part of what we can do with this game. So going forward I can only see us getting more out of it but it's too early to say.



RISING CONCERNS

Metal Gear Solid: Rising – why it isn't all rosy

Metal Gear Solid: Rising could well be in trouble – while it hasn't exactly seen protracted development, with a predicted release of late 2012 meaning three years being made, it has been somewhat under the radar. A lack of transparency leads to worries, naturally, but this isn't the only problem *Rising* faces.

Play spoke to Edward Woo, research analyst at Wedbush Securities, who revealed his concerns about the game: "I don't think the long development time hurt the reputation, but more likely made people less interested in the franchise. Gamers have spent lots of time and money on other games since the last *MGS* so now [*Rising*] will have to convince people to come back to the franchise after such a long hiatus."

He went on: "The one problem with games that are released too far apart is that the fan base may lose interest in the series. I think this may be the case with *Rising*, as other games (especially the *Call Of Duty* series) have come along and attracted gamers' interest and money."

While Kojima's title will supposedly be unveiled at the VGAs in early December while the rumours continue to swirl around the title over its alleged status, there's one thing Woo is sure about – *MGS* alone won't save a flailing Japanese games market: "I think [*Rising*] can help, but to be honest the Japanese market has bigger issues that cannot be fixed with one game." But it isn't all doom and gloom: "*MGS* still has a loyal fan base, and should do well."



NEED FOR SPEED CONTROVERSY

Steve Anthony, senior producer on *Need For Speed: The Run*, talks about the E3 reaction, online pass and QTEs

NEGATIVE REACTION AT E3

"I think the reaction to it was greater than what we expected. It got attention on the game, which is good. I think people were concerned on how much is out of the car. You know, are we still a driving game? We're 100 per cent a driving game. Always have been."

QTEs BEING HATED

"I think people's reactions to it were especially strong because it's such a polarising gameplay feature. I think when people play the game and they realise how they fit in, they'll realise they're not a bad thing and they make a lot of sense."

POTENTIAL SALES

"In terms of sales, we still think we can compete with the big games. We still want to be a triple-A title. There's no reason why we can't compete. Obviously trying to knock off *Call Of Duty* probably isn't a realistic goal but top three is certainly possible."

ONLINE PASS

"There are pros and cons, like anything. From a gameplay perspective, we try to do the best we can to get everyone to play our game no matter what. I can't really comment on the higher level of the specifics behind it."

THE FINAL FIVE

Which are the five best *Final Fantasy* games currently available? Below is our humbly constructed list and yes, we left out *VII. Treachery?* Actually, it's because it was too obvious. **Play** – the mind-game masters. Pow!



Final Fantasy VIII (PSN/PS3/PSP)

Sandwiched between the behemoth that is *FFVII*, and the immensely popular *FFIX*, poor eight and nine are often overlooked. *FFVIII* will always have a special place in **Play**'s fat little heart, though, if only for the amazing music and Zell's hair. This was a classic RPG with a great plot, and Squall and Rinoa have one of the most touching relationships witnessed in a videogame.

Final Fantasy IX (PSN/PS3/PSP)

The one with the pretty-boy hero and the power-hungry villain. Oh... wait. That's all of them. What really set *FFIX* apart was its dedication to the 'fantasy' element of its genre; Gaia is a medieval world inhabited by humans, black mages, moogles and various anthropomorphic creatures. Its style makes for nostalgic play but it's still incredibly fresh for a ten-year-old game.

Dissidia: Final Fantasy (PSP)

Dissidia introduced us to a nifty battle system, its airborne combat akin to scenes in *Advent Children*, and allowed us to play as characters from numerous *FF* titles (blatant fan service but who's complaining?). Putting aside the cheesy dialogue and chess-board interludes, which are luckily less focused upon in *Dissidia 012*, the original makes the list because it's something of a milestone in *Final Fantasy* history.

Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII (PSP)

One of PSP's best games to date. For a start, you get to revisit the world of *Final Fantasy VII* before the original events took place. You learn where the Buster Sword originated, what Sephiroth was like as a (comparatively) good guy, and why Cloud turned out so angry. It's a heart-breaking story – the ending destroyed us – punctuated by wonderful visuals, voiceovers, music and gameplay.

Final Fantasy XIII (PS3)

Yep, we went there. It's no secret that this *Final Fantasy* was met with a lukewarm response, and has since been bashed and bruised from every angle. Sure, it's too linear and certain characters are neck-snappingly annoying, etcetera. But it compensates for its flaws with a welcome revamp to the battle system, making fights faster, smarter and more exciting, with indescribably beautiful graphics to boot.



If characters were real...

Bringing characters to life: a common pastime for gaming fans at London's **MCM Expo**. We talk to some of the dedicated cosplayers about how and why they dress up...

1 Bayonetta

"I bought the catsuit but I modified it myself. It took just under a year. Believe it or not, it's not actually finished! The trigger guards and holsters are missing, and I want to make the chest a bit smaller."

2 Vincent Valentine...

"...In his Chaos form. I didn't like *Dirge Of Cerberus* much but the character designs are awesome. This is mostly craft-foam; the wings are made from a clothes-horse with fabric and wire and the fangs are Hollywood-level professional fangs."

3 Castle Crashers' Knights

"We made these over the course of about four months. They're mostly wood and foam and the heads are bins. The reason we chose these characters: violence!"

4 Lightning/Fang

Lightning: "We really like the *Final Fantasy* series and we've watched people cosplay on YouTube." Fang: "We bought these costumes but we improvised them a bit. She made her sword and I had a staff – but it got broken this morning!"

5 Lara Croft

"I've been a big fan since the first *Tomb Raider*. I bought the outfit but I added a good spray tan and that's about it really! The Expo has a great atmosphere – you get to meet so many like-minded people."

6 Chun-Li (s)

Chun-Li (on the right): "I'm a big fan of the series and it just so happened that my girlfriend's costume was a size too small so we bought another costume – and I ended up wearing it!"

7 Snow Villiers

"I enjoy cosplaying and I've wanted to do *Final Fantasy* for a while. I bought my costume because I have pretty poor sewing skills; I didn't wear a wig or bandanna, but I'll try to go all out next time!"

UNCHARTED 3 BROKEN?

Aiming complaints hit Naughty Dog

While most players love *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*, the shooting hasn't proved quite as popular. The problem appears to be a subtle change since *Uncharted 2* that no one can quite put their finger on (inconsistent reticle speed and deadzones have been blamed most frequently) but what's really highlighting the issue is that the shooting in *Uncharted 3*'s multiplayer seems far more responsive than in single-player. Furthermore, videos on YouTube have shown clear evidence of input lag in single-player.

THE FANS SAY

“After playing single-player for a couple hours tonight, I was greatly irked by the aim system change, and came to the exact same conclusion about the insensitive diagonals as well. To me, it feels like the controls were programmed such that the deadzone on each axis is proportional to how far the stick is being pushed on the other axis, which means most of the time you're gonna get nothing but left/right/up/down movements against your desire – gargos15”

NAUGHTY DOG SAYS

“Aiming is identical to *Uncharted 2* – we took a look at the values side by side. We did adjust the sensitivity to be much higher in *Uncharted 3* to give you a more precise feel. With *Uncharted 2* it was pretty much guaranteed you'd aim in one of the eight directions and it was hard to deviate from that (imagine it being almost like a traditional eight-way arcade stick). With *Uncharted 3*, you can deviate from the straight path from each of the eight directions much easier and more precisely.”

WE SAY

“There's definitely something different with the aiming in *Uncharted 3*, but that's not the same as saying there's something broken about the aiming. It's just the multiplayer slickness of the shooting that seems to have set the cat among the forum pigeons, who are all shouting at Naughty Dog to change the controls. Fortunately Naughty Dog has seen fit to work on a patch following the forum noise so it's proof that complaining produces results. Moan more everyone! It works! Etc.”



FACEBOOK FRIENDLY PS3 GAMES

What you can play while stalking your ex without ever pausing



THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

Thanks to the new recharging health system, *Skyrim* encourages periods of inactivity while you wait for your life bar to refill before charging off into the darkness. But don't just sit there and idly wait – get poking! On Facebook, we mean. Not in *Skyrim*.



DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

You know those moments where you miss your window of opportunity to take out a guard and have to wait for him to lap the entire courtyard again? What better time to check your ex's profile and curse the privacy settings they've enabled!



DARK SOULS

You can't recharge your health but you can't play it for more than an hour without a break, plus you can't pause the game. That's what *Dark Souls*' bonfire breaks are for! They're basically Facebook breaks of medieval times. With less dragons. And more dying.

Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

- The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim**
Bethesda
It's not just the biggest console RPG ever. It's one of the biggest PlayStation 3 games ever made.
- COD: Modern Warfare 3**
Activision
Infinity Ward puts the emphasis on a slick rollercoaster ride of explosions and... more explosions.
- Battlefield 3**
EA
The world's shown to be a fragile, rickety place as *Battlefield*'s chaos brings it tumbling to its knees.
- Batman: Arkham City**
Warner Bros.
The best superhero game ever made and arguably contender for the best game on PS3 full stop.
- FIFA 12**
EA Sports
Still a class apart from other football games, even if it's no longer the top dog with the big releases around.
- Uncharted 3**
Sony
It doesn't dazzle like *Uncharted 2* but it still effortlessly outshines its peers without breaking sweat.
- Saints Row: The Third**
THQ
Mental, bonkers, crazy, outrageous, shocking, ridiculous, saucy, sassy... and a decent game, too.
- Deus Ex: Human Revolution**
Square Enix
It's been forgotten about even though it only came out in August. Don't forget about it! Ace game.
- Resistance 3**
Sony
Criminally underrated shooter. Buy it! We're not begging you to buy it. Well, we are. A bit.
- Assassin's Creed: Revelations**
Ubisoft
Starting to show its age, although it still has moments of class.

PSP CHART

- FIFA 12**
EA
Until PS Vita hits, this will remain the best sports game on any handheld, anywhere, ever. Fact.
- Persona 2: Innocent Sin**
Ghostlight
Niche RPG freshens up the stale PSP line-up with the portable version of a classic.
- Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean**
Disney
If *Play* hadn't banned the word charming, we'd call this charming. But we have so we won't.
- Football Manager 2012**
Sega
It's not the best version but it's still dangerously addictive and now portable, too. Yikes.
- Legend Of Heroes: Trials In The Sky**
Ghostlight
The second treat for RPG fans this month from Ghostlight.

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.

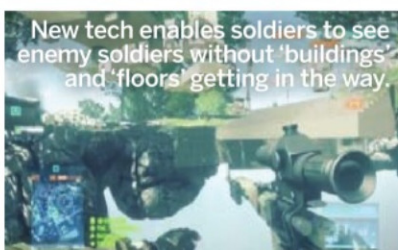
MAKING A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION, BY DICE, CREATOR OF BATTLEFIELD 3



Everyone will love this Beta. Even that guy in the floor.



OF COURSE soldiers act like this on the real battlefield. Standing up is so old hat.



New tech enables soldiers to see enemy soldiers without 'buildings' and 'floors' getting in the way.



Our new ragdoll physics are really quite something.



AIEEEEEEE!

THE BIG RELEASE

2012 PSVITA

By now there's every chance that the PlayStation Vita has made its way onto Japanese shelves. There will be queuing. There will be fighting. There will be lines stretching for miles around Japan's tech districts. Some of you may well have imported a model, because you are mental. We salute you.

JUST RELEASED



MODERN WARFARE 3

Technically this hasn't *just* been released, but given the *Call Of Duty* game's reluctance to work online for around a month after the game has been released this is probably the perfect time to dip back in and see if all the problems are fixed. Probably not, though.

RELEASELIST January's looking like a good month to play all those Christmas games!

DECEMBER

Hunter's Trophy
Just Dance 3

JANUARY

UFC Undisputed 3

FEBRUARY

Final Fantasy XIII-2
Zone Of The Enders HD Collection
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning
Asura's Wrath
Neverdead
Inversion
Binary Domain

MARCH

Mass Effect 3
Starhawk
Street Fighter x Tekken
Birds Of Steel
Armored Core 5
Max Payne 3
Aliens: Colonial Marines
Far Cry 3
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier
Twisted Metal X

THE REST OF 2012

XCOM
DmC
BioShock Infinite
Far Cry 3

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier
SSX
Brothers In Arms: Furious 4
Resistance: Burning Skies
Uncharted: Golden Abyss
Everybody's Golf Vita
Sound Shapes
WipEout 2048
Little Deviants
Hustle Kings Vita
ModNation Racers Vita
Reality Fighters
Super Stardust Delta
LittleBigPlanet Vita
The Darkness II
Silent Hill Downpour

FORWARD PLANNER DECEMBER 2011

"He drives a car, does a poo, and then he falls in love" - Dave Shaw

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SUNDAY
				01 There aren't many games out. Play <i>Skyrim</i> ! We should all be playing <i>Skyrim</i> now.	02 HARRY POTTER 8-FILM COLLECTION If you're a fan of the <i>Potter</i> series pick this up. If you're not spend your money on games instead.	
04	05  A FEAST FOR CROWS George RR Martin wrote the ridiculously popular <i>Game Of Thrones</i> series. If you like that, you'll probably like this, okay?	06 		08 Naughty Dog has promised tons of DLC for <i>Uncharted 3</i> , look for it to hit around this date.		
11 REAL MADRID VS BARCELONA When they're not kicking seven shades out of each other, El Clasico is football at its best.	12	13		15 Remember <i>Resistance 3</i> ? The game everyone overlooked? We'll be playing it online. JOIN US.		
18	19 			22 PLAY 213 The best Christmas present you could wish for, and best of all it's already wrapped.	23	24
25 CHRISTMAS Celebrate Christmas by giving the people you love thoughtful gifts that show how much you care. Then play games.	26 BOXING DAY For some strange reason <i>Futurama</i> Season 5 hits Blu-ray today, so use your Xmas money and run out and buy it will you?			29	30	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE We all know what you're going to do today, so just go and do it. No one likes you when you're sober anyway.

PSN HEAT BAR!

BINARY DOMAIN

We still hate that name. It's rubbish, total rubbish. We asked Sega to change it, but it told us to do one. Maybe.

UDRAW: INSTANT ARTIST

Hmmmmmmmmmm. While we can see what Ubisoft was up to here, getting all excited by its tablet peripheral, this seems like nonsense to us.

THE DARKNESS II

Not out for a while, but we're predicting this will be a cracking shooter when it lands early next year.

ONLINE FPSs

Battlefield and *Call Of Duty* are out and doing what they do best: enabling you to shoot people dead, a lot. Cheers lads.



PSVITA GAMES FOR £40? MADNESS

Sony's pricing strategy in the spotlight. Again



IN THEORY, PSVITA has everything going for it. Great power, a second analogue stick, near-PS3 level graphics, touch screen controls. A 'proper' gaming experience, available on the move. Just look at *Uncharted: Golden Abyss* and tell us the thing is going to fail.

And then you find out that games such as *Uncharted* are going to cost around the same price as full-fat PS3 retail releases and suddenly everything falls down. Sony has revealed the price of Japanese launch games which correspond to around the £40 mark. Obviously we'll have to see how that changes (if at all) for the Western releases, but for now it's the best barometer we have for gauging how much boxed Vita software will cost.

Ten years ago this would have been par for the course. And even five years ago it would have worked. But not now – because, unless we've suddenly gone mental – the iWhatever revolution isn't just happening, it has happened. Done. Dusted. Are people going to want to spend forty notes on a game to play to waste time on when they're used to paying far, far less on iOS? We're not sure.

We understand the pricing structure, even if we don't agree with it. Games cost money to make, increasingly more so as technology gallops along. Titles like the aforementioned *Uncharted* don't just pop into existence: they've been in production for years, and have the heinous budgets to match. They're console games on a handheld: all the power of the home experience but also all of the cost.

Does the consumer care about this? Not a chance: they care about getting games for as low a price as they can, and faced with the choice of paying £40, or less than a tenner for a game we know which one they'll choose.

Sony has mooted that the games will be cheaper if downloaded directly, but how much cheaper is the real question. Anything over £20 and we're still in dangerous waters. Sony is going to have a hard enough time convincing enough casual players to fork out £279 for a dedicated gaming device when they've probably already got one in their pocket (or a capable iOS/Android phone), but then asking more than £20 for titles seems like a real risk for Sony to take.



UNCHARTED: GOLDEN ABYSS

Yes, it looks beautiful. But who's going to pay for it?



PSVITA

We want one of these, and we want it yesterday, but we don't want to have to pay through the nose for software.

14 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT BIOSHOCK INFINITE



- 1 IT USES UNREAL ENGINE 3**
No real surprises here then.
- 2 YOU CAN ONLY CARRY TWO WEAPONS**
In a nod to modern FPS games, you can only carry two weapons at any given time, forcing you to mix and match.
- 3 REGENERATING HEALTH?**
The live demo we've seen for *BioShock Infinite* shows health shooting back up when it's low. So it could be Regenerating Health or...
- 4 HEALTH PACKS?**
...it could be God mode, which developers tend to enable for presentations. So does this mean we'll see Health Packs instead?
- 5 TURNS OUT, IT'S NEITHER**
Ken Levine has said on Twitter that the health system used in *BioShock Infinite* won't use Regenerating Health or Health Packs.
- 6 ELIZABETH IS 20**
Yup. We've been asked this more times than we'd like to remember, so there's the official answer.
- 7 ATTACK WITH CROWS**
One of the Vigors – that's *BioShock Infinite* talk for Plasmids – sees you attacking enemies with flocks of crows. Nice.
- 8 THE NEW ANDREW RYAN**
Columbia leader Zachary Hale Comstock seems unpopular with some locals, who are seen burning his posters.
- 9 HANDYMAN DOESN'T REPLACE BIG DADDY**
With his statuesque build and glass heart, he was initially seen as *Infinite*'s Big Daddy but his role is actually to support the mob attacking you.
- 10 SONGBIRD'S ROLE**
Elizabeth's metal guardian is the only thing she's known while trapped in Columbia, thus she's trying to escape but also has an awkward, complex relationship with him.
- 11 IT'S NOT AS BLACK AND WHITE**
Not in terms of colour but in terms of the NPCs you meet. Unlike *BioShock*, they won't attack you on sight. So what will they respond to? Hmmmm.
- 12 BACK TO 1983**
We know Elizabeth can tear holes in time to open up an alternate reality but they all seem to point to 1983, from what we've seen so far. Why? We'll find out in the game itself.
- 13 NOSTRUMS ARE NEW EVE TONICS**
You can pay higher prices for stable Nostrums to level up or go for the cheaper option known as Pot Luck. It might not be what you expect, though...
- 14 WAR IS HAPPENING**
BioShock happened after the fact while *BioShock Infinite* places you at the start of the conflict and as the cause. Good luck with that.

RPG WARFARE

Which current RPG should you pick up?

	Celebrity Voice Actors	Memory Loss	Time Travel	Fire Spells	Robots	EventT&A	
FINAL FANTASY XIII-2 (PS3) It's not out yet but having put up with a tornado of angry keyboard clattering following the release of <i>Final Fantasy XIII</i> , Squenix looks to put things right.	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	It's doesn't hit too many clichés but it's quicker, it's cooler, it's another-adjective-beginning-with-q-er and as open-ended as a <i>Final Fantasy</i> game gets.
THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM (PS3) [Obligatory joke about having booked so much time off work to play it that you've forgotten where the office actually is.]	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	<i>Elders Scrolls V: Skyrim</i> is the choice for those with time, dwarf beards, and a fondness for "you can count on my steel!" bellowing.
THE LEGEND OF HEROES: TRAILS IN THE SKY (PSP) Ghostlight continues to support niche genres and niche platforms with JRPG <i>Trails In The Sky</i> on PSP.	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	The most 'pure' Japanese RPG here in terms of gameplay, clichés and genre tropes, it's a glorious throwback to simpler times in the genre.
PERSONA 2: INNOCENT SIN (PSP) Having not noticed the helpful number lodged in the middle of that title, Ghostlight released <i>Persona 3</i> on PSP and is now releasing <i>Persona 2</i> . Oops.	X	X	X	✓	X	X	Definitely the most unique game on the list, thanks to its unique atmosphere and Gothic overtones, <i>Persona 2</i> is a curious mix of Ye Olde RPG and modern trappings.
FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS: LONESOME ROAD (DLC) The last bit of DLC for the <i>New Vegas</i> sees you revisit the story of the original Courier charged with delivering the Platinum Chip.	X	X	X	X	✓	X	While dull, <i>Lonesome Road</i> continues to stay far away from superficial genre norms, and <i>New Vegas</i> remains the most likely here to draw in the anti-RPG crowd.
DRAGON AGE II: MARK OF THE ASSASSIN (DLC) It might have had a mixed reception but BioWare keeps churning out the DLC, this time with Felicia Day sexing up the extra content.	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	Its key-hunting and action gameplay makes it feel more like an adventure game rather than died-in-the-wool RPG add-on, so genre enthusiasts should look elsewhere.

5 SEQUELS THAT MADE BIG LEAP

In the movie industry, sequels are usually derided as recycled tat used to cash-in on name recognition, and are very rarely better than their predecessors. Videogames, however, are a different matter, quality wise at least. Here are the top titles that outclassed their predecessors

1 HITMAN 2

The first *Hitman* game was, to put it bluntly, pretty awful. The concept was there, of course, but the action was found wanting and it was extremely buggy. *Hitman 2* solved all of the predecessor's problems and gave us one of PS2's best games.



2 RESIDENT EVIL 2

The first *Resident Evil* game is a masterpiece, but instead of shrinking from the task of following it up Capcom went out and created an equally good sequel. Why not, eh? Still one of the best games in PS history.

3 METAL GEAR SOLID 3

With *MGS 2*'s incomprehensible plot and bland setting disappointing a vast swathe of players, *MGS 3* had some making up to do. It did so in fine style, introducing Naked Snake into a gorgeous, jungle survival setting. And the plot made sense, too, which was nice.



4 RESISTANCE 3

So much better than its two forbears that it's unreal, *Resistance 3* is a dark road trip of a game that finally makes the series' concept and gameplay sing in harmony. Totally bleak, uncompromisingly violent and packed with interesting set pieces, *Resistance 3* finally got it right.

twitterwatch



@OneofSwords

"Gaming: If you're not having fun, you're doin' it wrong. Just that simple."

@PlayMag_UK says: We

appreciate the sentiments

of Activision's blogger Dan

Amrich but has he played *Spider-Man: Edge Of Time*? Did he have fun? If not, does that mean he's doing it wrong? What does it all mean? So many questions, not enough spa



5 GTA III

Of course this made the list: why wouldn't it? *GTA III* not only redefined the series from top-down car chase into an open-world voyage of discovery, but also changed gaming as a whole, showing developers exactly what PS2 could do. Genius.

TEAM PICKS

The best sequels, according to us



ANDY

FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

It's a proper sequel to the original *Fallout* games – unlike *Fallout 3*. I spend days playing it and I only switch it off when it's time to go to Sound Circus.



DAN

NBA 2K12

One of the toughest sports games around but also the best, *NBA 2K12* is so good that it's the only reason I switch my PS3 on these days.



IAN

UNCHARTED 2

A huge step-up from the original *Uncharted*, *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* blew my mind with its awesome set pieces, striking locations and Drake's quips. I love quips, me.



RYAN

SHENMUE II

It's just the best game ever, basically, and that's that. If you disagree, email me a time and a place and I will fight you. And that is a promise.

The anatomy of...

BATMAN

Maybe the greatest man that ever lived, Bruce Wayne is also a shining example to all trauma victims: why spend years in therapy when you can simply dress up as a nocturnal creature and beat people to near death? Exactly

CAPE FEAR

One of the defining characteristics of The Caped Crusader is, er, his cape. Enabling him to glide around Gotham like he owns the place (which he probably does), it's also a natty offensive weapon and, according to the *Amazing Bat-Man* cartoon (which we may or may not have just made up), can also be used as a hammock for him and work experience boy Robin to sleep in after a hard day at work. True story.

RUBBER & KEVLAR

Batman's armour has changed over the years, and not always for the better, as Joel Schumacher's interpretation in *Batman Forever* attests. Rocksteady has done a good job with Bat's outfit in *Arkham City*, going for a steely vibe that is a little muscle-bound but thankfully features no ridiculous nipples. Which is always a relief.

TAKE OFF THE MASK

His greatest weapon in the war on crime, Batman's mask hides his true identity so that people won't flock to Twitter to tell everyone what he's up to. Because behind that mask, under a fantastic head of hair, is the mind of The World's Greatest Detective™. One of *Arkham City*'s triumphs is enabling players to utilise Detective mode to make everyone think *they're* the greatest detective, and not a plumber from Grimsby.

ASSAULT AND BAT-ERY

Despite the fact that he's classed as a superhero, Bruce Wayne only has one power: money. Billions of dollars, in fact, which is pretty good no matter how you slice it. As well as allowing him to buy loads of nice suits it also means that he can buy, as the Joker once famously said, 'those wonderful toys', including *Arkham City*'s remote-controlled Batarang. Basically, it's rad as balls.



BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

Rocksteady's awesome *Batman* sequel is out now for those who want to take to the skies of Arkham City as the badass Caped Crusader

LOOKIN' GOOD

The *Batman* legend has been adapted into videogame form many times. Sadly, most of these games are utter toilet. Here's the hall of shame from PlayStation's back catalogue



BATMAN FOREVER: THE ARCADE GAME 1996

Back in the Nineties, Acclaim wisely decided that every game it produced had to look like *Mortal Kombat*, ie ropey-looking digitised characters stiffly punching each other. *Batman Forever* was no exception: it was also no good.



BATMAN & ROBIN 1998

Based on the cine-trocity that Joel Schumacher had farted onto everyone's faces a year before, *Batman & Robin* was exactly what you expect from a licensed videogame based on a terrible movie: a terrible game. Who'd have thought it? Us actually.



BATMAN: GOTHAM CITY RACER 2001

It's a racing game. A racing game featuring the Bat himself as well as Nightwing and Batgirl. Need we say any more? Yes? Well, we won't. You know why this is a bad idea, and if you don't you're a babbling oaf.



BATMAN BEGINS 2005

Oh wait. *Batman Begins* was actually not too bad, as it was developed by Electronic Arts and – unlike previous *Batman* games – actually focused on stealth rather than walking left to right and punching everything until it died.

RE:PLAY

Listen, it's really very simple: you write words, you get games. Has anything ever been that simple? Maybe driving an automatic car

£57.99 for this?
No thanks.



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PSN = recession proof

Dear Play,

I know that this is probably a topic that you probably get a lot of letters about but I just wanted to briefly discuss the cost of downloading games from the PSN against full Blu-ray releases.

Last week when the store was updated I noticed *Driver: San Francisco* on there for £57.99! This just seems so overblown and can be found online for just under £33 at the time of writing. Then today I saw a list of new games to be added to the store this week and they include *FIFA 12* at £54.99 (£37.50 online), *Child Of Eden* at £23.99 (£13.99 online) and *Crysis 2* at £31.99 (£14.99 online). Just for these four games that means if you downloaded them from the store rather than buying the Blu-ray it would cost you an extra £69.48! Does anyone actually download games at these prices? The point of having no hard copy and no point of sale should surely be that games are, at least noticeably, if not remarkably, cheaper than their physical counterparts?



This then got me thinking about the release of PSVita next year and how only big games will be released on memory card with everything else being downloaded. If Vita games follow suit then I can see it definitely putting off a lot of gamers if they think they are being ripped off by being charged a high price because a game is only available online. I hope this isn't the case as I am quite looking forward to Sony's new handheld but there needs to be a fundamental shift in the way games are priced on the PSN store first.

Regards,

Pedelly, via email

Good points, well made. The pricing of some of the titles on PlayStation Network is absolutely ludicrous, and we can't believe that someone would actually pay that. Well, maybe anyone associated with Manchester City, but you get our point.

As for PSVita, we can't believe that Sony would be stupid enough to price its customers out of purchases by charging silly money for games.

That said, Sony has a huge fight on its hands to convince players that even £20 isn't too much to pay for games, especially when they can get titles for as little as 69p on Apple's numerous iOS devices.

Playing with friends: overrated

Dear Play,

This is a rant. I'm going to rant about multiplayer and online. Enjoy.



The stuff we want to hear about!

1

Rage: why are the graphics so bad?

2

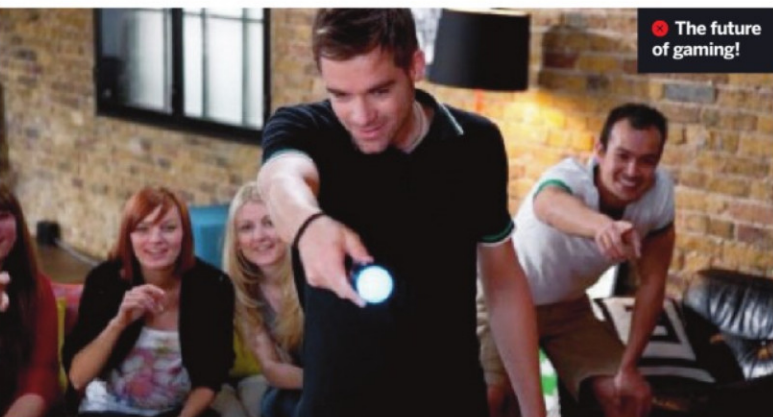
Did you buy Battlefield, COD, or both?

3

Why is Ian so grumpy all the time?

Multiplayer is great, you can kill people with your friends, kill your friends, uh, kill your friends' friends. It's very enjoyable. But whatever happened to single-player? What happened to playing with just the game and not having society drag you back into real life?

Multiplayer is being treated like a necessity nowadays, like a game is nothing if it hasn't any online capabilities. For example, I saw an article about how *Dark Souls* would be better than *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (not saying who wrote it but let's just say they're very IGNorant) and one of the reasons was that *Skyrim* didn't have multiplayer/co-op. *The Elder Scrolls* is one of the few remaining franchises that hasn't given in to the temptations of multiplayer, it's a game with nothing online at all and yet it's so easy to pour hundreds of hours into it. The formula works, it works good, so why would it be a good idea to change it? Some single-player games have been successful in putting multiplayer in, such as *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*. But if *Uncharted 2* didn't have any multiplayer, would it still have been as successful? My guess; no, but it wouldn't have been worse. Because multiplayer is so overrated in today's society that a game without multiplayer is shunned. I'm not saying multiplayer should be taken away all together, some games rely solely on multiplayer and it works, like *Battlefield*. But when a single-player game gives in and puts multiplayer in, the single-player experience isn't as good as last time and the game isn't perfect at single or multiplayer, just equal at both. Can anyone at Play say they think *God Of War* would make a great multiplayer game? Or *Fallout*? Or *The Elder Scrolls*? Or *Heavy Rain*? I hope your answer is the same as mine...



The future of gaming!



Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game. For each letter we included this month, the sender wins a copy of NBA 2K12, which is available from 2K Games for the PS3 (£49.99).

Thanks for listening to me rant and I'll be sure to send you and the rest of the team a cookie if this gets printed. I apologise if bribery is not tolerated.
Justin Kittle, via email

Well, bribery is tolerated on Play, but only under certain conditions. Fortunately, cookies are one of them. The other is sun-ripened tomatoes.

Anyway, we know exactly where you're coming from. There's not a lot more frustrating than knowing that **Staunchly Single-Player Game Now Has A Multiplayer Mode Because Some Marketing Prick Thought It Would Be A Good Idea.**

Condemned 2 is one such example: a story-driven, atmospheric experience that has a multiplayer mode bolted on almost as an afterthought. As you mention, **Uncharted 2** doesn't need a multiplayer component, but the sad fact is that with **Call Of Duty** striding over the videogame industry like a colossus every developer is running scared that their game won't sell if it doesn't have an online man-shoot mode.

Now we're depressed. Thanks. Have a free game.

MONEY MONEY MONEY

Dear Play,
First of all let me say I love your mag and look forward to every issue coming through my letterbox.

Now that's out of the way I was wondering what your thoughts are on the release schedule of games,



Hey, we like this game, too, but maybe not quite as much as JayLEGEND.

between me writing this and Christmas there are 14 games I am interested in getting, with each game being about £40 that's £560 I would have to spend to get them all! Unfortunately, this means I am going to have to miss out on great games like *Rage*, *Skylrim*, *Modern Warfare 3* and many more until they have dropped down in price by a good chunk just so I can afford other great games like *Uncharted 3*, *Assassin's Creed Revelations*, *Battlefield 3* and *Arkham City*. I just don't see why every game company would release their game at the same time as other huge games. If they were to sell them in the summer time when there was nothing else coming out surely they would sell more copies. Just look at *L.A. Noire* as an example, even though it was a great game and sold copies on the back of that, I know a lot of people that bought it just because there was nothing else out.

Many thanks
James Fothergill, Blackpool
PS Say hello to Ian for me, Ian is fab!

Ian says hello, between scowls, obviously. As for the points you made in your letter, we sympathise: despite the fact that Play is staffed *only* by people with over a million Deutsche Marks to their name, there are too many games coming out over the holidays, far too many for even us to afford.

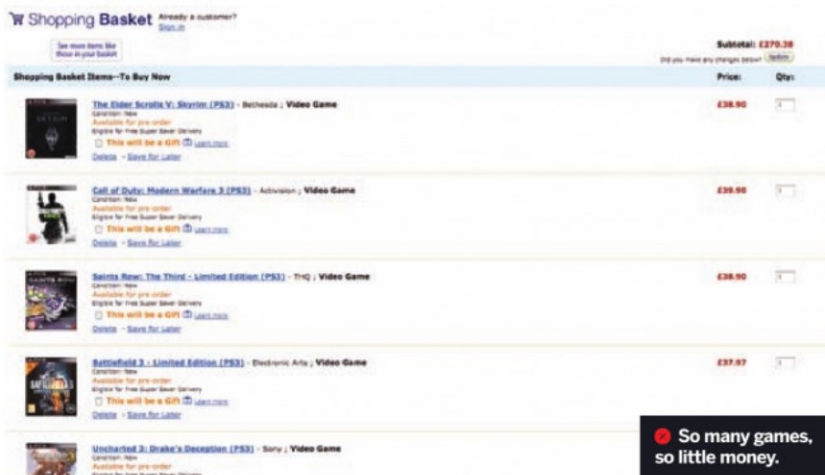
It's a problem that will seemingly never go away. Are publishers thick? Yes, of course they are. But surely they must know that consumers can't afford all the games out there? It's a fight to the death, and only a few people are going to come out winning. Probably not us, we have to say.

No introduction necessary

Dear Play,
I booked a week off and thought it was the right time to crack into *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*. I got eager and finished the story before pretty much everything else so I started to collect my feathers and flags and clusters. I cracked the clusters first and then realised someone within the team that made the game thought it would be a good idea to make it so that when you do the cluster mission thing no more of the game gets saved... It all froze at 55%. That's just unacceptable so I've had to start again. Luckily *Assassin's Creed* is my favourite so it's worth it.

A disappointed,
JayLEGEND

Okay.



So many games, so little money.



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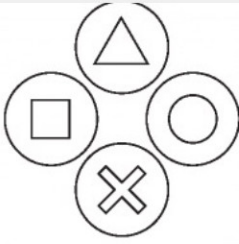
ISSN 1358-9474



1000 GAMES THAT WILL SAVE PLAYSTATION

Join us as we run through the videogames that will
establish the PS3 as the greatest console ever





YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Grand Theft Auto V

If you haven't seen the trailer yet, play our DVD. We can wait. Got questions? That's good because here at **Play**, we've got plenty of answers...



WHEN DID WORK ON GTA V START?

Early 2010 is best bet

Grand Theft Auto producer Dan Houser stated that the team had started thinking about *Grand Theft Auto V* back in November 2009. It wasn't until later, in July 2010, that the first evidence of development emerged when Rockstar North posted seven job ads – environment artists, character animators and physics programmers – relating to a new title. As Rockstar North's only project at this time was working with Rockstar San Diego on finishing *Red Dead Redemption*, and given the trailer itself has a lot of gameplay footage taken from various locations suggesting an advanced state of development, it's fair to assume that Rockstar North began work on *Grand Theft Auto V* in early 2010.

WHAT IS IT?

GTA IV sequel

The sequel to 2008's *Grand Theft Auto IV*, of course. As has been the case with all the games in the series to date, it'll be an open-world game taking place in a fictional city. The usual mix of evading the police, a living city and real-life distractions are correct and present. It's everything you expect from a *Grand Theft Auto* game but there does seem to be one difference. Rather than rising from the bottom to the top – see Tommy Vercetti (recovering stolen drug money), CJ (framed for murder) and Niko (immigrant searching for American dream), you seem to have fallen from the top to the bottom. The narrator talks of coming to Los Santos in search of a new life and the trailer is initially dominated by scenes of wealth and luxury before turning to homes for sale, beggars and police chases.



WHERE IS IT SET?

Fictional Southern California returns

It'll be set in fictional California, as the trailer showed the return of Los Santos (fictional Los Angeles) and Vinewood (fictional Hollywood). These were the same locations used in *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* and some specific locales from that game appear in the trailer for *Grand Theft Auto V*, such as Santa Monica pier. The sweeping view of the city shows that there's perhaps scope for exploration beyond Los Santos but for now, that's the confirmed setting of the game.

WILL IT SELL MORE THAN GTA IV AND BLACK OPS?

“I think it will sell 18 - 24 million, so more than *GTA IV* and fewer than *Black Ops*. Gamers are passionate because the developers are passionate. Rockstar puts its soul into the game and endeavours to break new ground with each iteration. Gamers love each game because they are significantly bigger and better than the prior version, with tons of fresh content”
– Michael Pachter, Wedbush Securities



WHAT DOES ROCKSTAR SAY?

“*Grand Theft Auto V* is another radical reinvention of the *Grand Theft Auto* universe. We are incredibly excited to share our new vision with our fans –”
Sam Houser, Rockstar Games founder

WHEN IS IT SET?



Modern times with recession theme

Rockstar has confirmed that *Grand Theft Auto V* will be set in the present day, which is no surprise when you examine the trailer with an analytical eye. With many of the houses being up for sale, homeless people asking for spare change and the narrator implying a fall in fortunes, the trailer seemed to lean on the theme of recession, which is obviously fairly apt thanks to the recent global financial crisis.



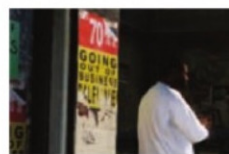
WHO DO YOU PLAY?

Multiple characters... and Tommy Vercetti?

This hasn't yet been confirmed but there's still plenty of interesting information to chew over. Before the trailer hit, there were rumours that you could play as multiple characters, made more credible by those same rumours suggesting the game would be set in fictional Los Angeles (which turned out to be true). The trailer doesn't show us who the protagonist is. This is an unusual step for Rockstar as prior *Grand Theft Auto* protagonists Tommy Vercetti, CJ, Niko all took centre stage in previous trailers. This would back up the idea of there being multiple characters. There was initially some confusion over whether the narrator of the trailer was Ray Liotta, leading to speculation that the older man in the trailer is none other than an aged Tommy Vercetti. However, the return of *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*'s star may not be on the cards, as Ray Liotta's agent has confirmed that it was not his voice on the trailer.



THINGS WE NOTICED



1 Going out of business signs reinforcing recession theme.



2 Pleasure Pier is Santa Monica pier in all but name.



3 Pump & Run gymnasium T-shirts – are gym mini-games back?



4 Los Puerta Freeway, which translates to 'the gates' or 'the doors'.



5 Piercers and wig shop near each other, could be customisation options.



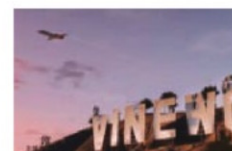
6 Tequi-La-La nightclub – seedy stripclubs available as locations?



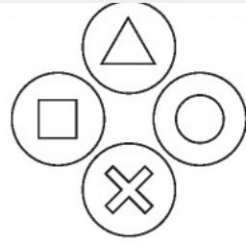
7 Wolf's For Rent, could be allowing you to rent property and not just buy.



8 San Andreas numberplates on the cars and trucks.



9 Jet flying over Vinewood sign, so we should be able to revisit the sign.



WHAT DO DEVELOPERS SAY?

“I thought the timing was interesting [revealing logo on the same day as *BF3*'s US launch] but like everyone I'm anxious to see what they are doing, but more importantly...when – **Jameson Durall, design director at Volition**”



RELEASE DATE?

24 May suggests trailer

Rockstar hasn't said. Much of the guesswork places the release date between mid-2012 and early-2013, which is likely due to the apparent advanced state of the game in the trailer. However, there is one big clue that is easy to overlook. There's a scene of a man hammering in a For Sale sign, which seems innocent enough. But there's also a very clear 2405 on the screen. Does this mean *Grand Theft Auto V* will go on sale on 24 May? Have another look at when the song on the trailer, *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake*, was released – 24 May 1968. Rockstar is either the master of subliminal messages or the master of coincidences. Either way, it's worth noting.



IS THIS ANOTHER 'SERIOUS' GTA?

Emphasis back on fun

One obvious change from *Grand Theft Auto IV* is the switch from dour, gritty and sombre tones to vibrant scenes of life and colour. *GTA IV* has suffered from complaints over the years that it was too serious and a little dry in comparison to its predecessors – judging by the trailer, Rockstar has been listening.

PS3 EXCLUSIVE?

Multiformat... with exclusive DLC?

Rockstar hasn't confirmed yet. It will almost certainly be a multiformat release on PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 and PC. The question is whether the DLC (which has also yet to be confirmed) gets any exclusivity or not. As PS Vita hardware is so new, it's unlikely to play a role in *Grand Theft Auto V*. It's also worth noting Rockstar's tradition of releasing separate *GTA* spin-offs for portable consoles (1. *Liberty City Stories*, 2. *Vice City Stories*, 3. *Chinatown Wars*).



100 GAMES THAT WILL SAVE PLAYSTATION



WHAT MUSIC WILL FEATURE?



Hip-hop, ska, minor 1968 hits

The music on the trailer was *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake* by The Small Faces, which was first released back on 24 May 1968. Whether this is indicative of the actual music in the final game or not is unknown. However, the return of fictional Southern California will likely see the return of hip-hop and we could also see ska and punk feature heavily, as Southern California is also host to Orange County – home of No Doubt, Reel Big Fish, Offspring, Lit and Social Distortion. Worth noting that Little Seoul, shown in the trailer, is found in Orange County.



WHAT ABOUT MULTIPLAYER?

Online multiplayer is back

Rockstar has confirmed that online multiplayer will return but it hasn't said what format it will take, what modes to expect or anything beyond the confirmation itself. *Grand Theft Auto IV*'s multiplayer suffered from wonky servers when it was launched, so this is one area for immediate improvement in the sequel.

WHAT DO PLAYERS SAY?

Initially I was disappointed to see it was returning to Los Santos, if only because I loved *Vice City* and was left slightly cold by *San Andreas*. Thematically, it just didn't hit the spot for me like the Eighties garishness of *Vice City* did. Even so, I'm glad *GTA V* looks more vibrant, colourful and fun than the slightly dour and grittier *GTA IV* did. That was my main concern before the trailer and the emphasis looks like it'll shift back to the humour and ridiculousness that arguably made the series to begin with – @PlayMagRyan

PLAY PREDICTIONS

- ☐ Bigger emphasis on multiplayer
- ☐ Multiple playable characters
- ☐ Female character to be playable
- ☐ Hip-hop and ska soundtrack
- ☐ Piercings and wigs as customisation options
- ☐ Bigger emphasis on property management
- ☐ Cameo from either Tommy Vercetti or Niko Bellic
- ☐ Streamlined levelling-up system
- ☐ Mobile phone system abolished

WHAT YOU MAY HAVE MISSED IN THE TRAILER



1 THE HUMOUR HAS RETURNED: It was a little hit and miss in *Grand Theft Auto IV* but this looks to be back on form. The jetski is called Speedophile, the pest control company's slogan is Bug-R-U's and the building work is by STD Contractors.



3 HIDDEN SLOGANS: On the passenger door of the police cars you'll find the slogan for Los Santos's finest: 'Obey and survive'. Likewise, the other slogan for pest control firm Bugstars is 'putting the FU in fumigate'.



2 THE NEW PISSWASSER?: *Grand Theft Auto IV*'s fictional beer was the infamous PissWasser. In *Grand Theft Auto V*, the beer is now Corona Barracho. Why is that relevant? It's not particularly but 'borrachito' is a Spanish slang term for 'drunk'. So now you know.



4 FICTIONAL COMPANIES: Pump Buddy (fitness magazine), Up-N-Atom (microwave burgers), Mile High Club (building), 247 (supermarket riffing on famous US chain 7-Eleven), Vapid Automobiles (the make of the police car shown in the chase).



1 SKYDIVING
OFF CHILIAD



2 JETPACKING
THROUGH
THE CITY



3 RIDING A BMX
ACROSS STATE



4 DRIVING
TANKS ONTO
BUILDINGS



5 TAKING IN
THE VIEW

THINGS WE CAN'T WAIT TO DO IN

SAN ANDREAS



6 SAILING

Looking back at 2004's
mega-hit and thinking
about our return visit



7 STEALING AIRCRAFT



8 FINDING SECRETS



9 GAMBLING
(AGAIN)



10 FINDING LOVE



02 HOMEFRONT 2
FROM: Crytek UK
RELEASED: TBC 2013

03 UFC UNDISPUTED 3
FROM: Yuke's Osaka
RELEASED: February 2012



05 DUST 514
FROM: CCP Games
RELEASED: Spring 2012

06 JOE DANGER: THE MOVIE
FROM: Hello Games
RELEASED: Early 2012

07 JOURNEY
FROM: thatgamecompany
RELEASED: Spring 2012

08 DISHONORED
FROM: Arkane Studios
RELEASED: Q2 2012

09 FAR CRY 3
FROM: Ubisoft Montreal
RELEASED: March 2012



10 THE DARKNESS II
FROM: Digital Extremes
RELEASED: February 2012



11 XCOM
FROM: 2K Marin
RELEASED: March 2012

12 EVERYBODY'S GOLF 6
FROM: Clap Hanz/Team Ninja
RELEASED: February 2012

THINGS NEVER STOP. YOU MIGHT HAVE MORE GAMES THAN YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE CAN'T LOOK AHEAD TO THE FUTURE. HERE ARE THE GAMES YOU MUST KEEP AN EYE ON...

04 TOMB RAIDER



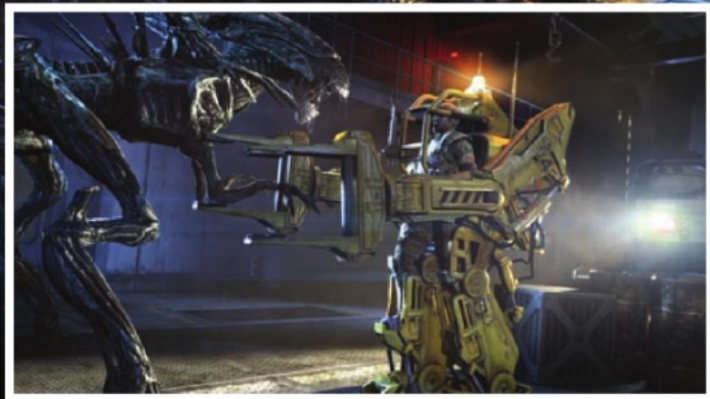
FROM: Crystal Dynamics
RELEASED: Late 2012

Now that Nathan Drake has finished hogging the limelight with *Uncharted*, all eyes turn to the reboot of Lara Croft. Usually we roll our eyes when a publisher tells us that a well-known series that's not especially known for its serious overtones (see *Max Payne*) starts talking about 'gritty reboots', but Lara's fight for survival against both man and nature on a tropical island looks suitably 'Tomb Raider' for us. There'll be less gunplay, more exploration and RPG elements as players mould Lara into the person she is in later games. Promising.

“Lara's fight for survival against both man and nature on a tropical island looks suitably 'Tomb Raider' for us. There'll be less gunplay but more exploration and RPG elements”



13 ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES



FROM: Gearbox Software

RELEASED: Spring 2012

Even though it didn't actually make it, Gearbox's reputation has been sullied by the aberration that was *Duke Nukem Forever*. But the company has given itself a number of opportunities to fix that in the next year or two – and *Colonial Marines* is looking like it could be one of its best bets. Not only could it restore the developer's besmirched repete but *Aliens* could damn well save the PS3 as we know it. A film tie-in with passion, character and anal attention to detail behind it is a dangerous thing, after all. There's the potential for a real hit here.

16 RESIDENT EVIL 6

FROM: Capcom

RELEASED: TBC 2013

Resident Evil 4 was one of the best games ever made. *Resident Evil 5* was slammed for being, among other things, too similar to it. So now Capcom is apparently changing tack with *Resident Evil 6*. We expect dinosaurs.

On a serious note, *Resi 6* has a lot of work to do to ensure that new players want to take the ride: fans will buy it regardless, but with *Dead Space 2* now the undisputed champion of horror-themed shooters and other action games far outperforming Capcom's efforts this has to be something very good indeed. We're predicting a return to the series' roots: zombies, jump-scares and ridiculous dialogue.



21 SYNDICATE

FROM: Starbreeze Studios

RELEASED: February 2012

It's still not *Syndicate* as we know it but it still looks like it might be a fun experience. There's also no doubting Starbreeze's ability to make atmospheric and engaging experiences.



26 MAX PAYNE 3

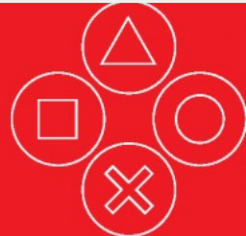
FROM: Rockstar Studios

RELEASED: March 2012

We can only hope that Rockstar remembers that this game will be called *Max Payne 3* and not 'Man On Fire 2', because if this isn't as over the top and goofy as the previous two games it will fail. It'd be like those people who took *Alan Wake* seriously all over again. His name's Alan! ALAN!

Having said that, *Max Payne 3* looks the part and we're intrigued to see what Rockstar does with the new Rio setting. Original developer Remedy has given the new dev its blessing to carry on with the series, and we're hopeful this'll be as funny as it is brutal, like the last games.

02 - 26



14 STARHAWK

FROM: LightBox Interactive

RELEASED: February 2012



15 I AM ALIVE

FROM: Ubisoft Shanghai

RELEASED: TBC 2012

17 QUANTUM CONUNDRUM

FROM: Airtight Games

RELEASED: TBC 2012

18 BLACK KNIGHT SWORD

FROM: Grasshopper Manufacture/

Digital Reality **RELEASED:** Feb 2012

19 SHANK 2

FROM: Klei Entertainment

RELEASED: TBC 2012

20 SKULLGIRLS

FROM: Reverge Labs

RELEASED: TBC 2012



22 TEKKEN X STREET FIGHTER

FROM: Namco Bandai

RELEASED: TBC 2013

23 BROTHERS IN ARMS: FURIOUS 4

FROM: Gearbox Software

RELEASED: TBC 2012

24 ARMORED CORE V

FROM: From Software

RELEASED: March 2012



25 DRAGON'S DOGMA

FROM: Capcom

RELEASED: March 2012

100 GAMES THAT WILL SAVE PLAYSTATION



27 PREY 2
FROM: Human Head Studios
RELEASED: TBC 2012

28 ANARCHY REIGNS
FROM: Platinum Games
RELEASED: January 2012

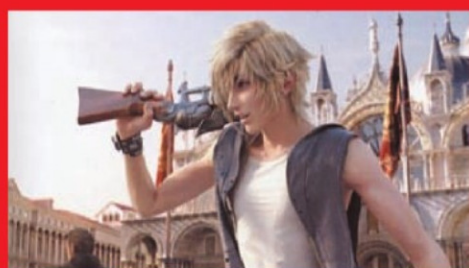
29 KINGDOMS OF AMALUR: RECKONING
FROM: 38 Studios/Big Huge Games
RELEASED: February 2012

30 INSANE
FROM: Volition, Inc
RELEASED: TBC 2013



32 SLY COOPER: THIEVES IN TIME
FROM: Sanzaru Games
RELEASED: TBC 2012

33 THIEF IV
FROM: Eidos Montreal
RELEASED: TBC 2012

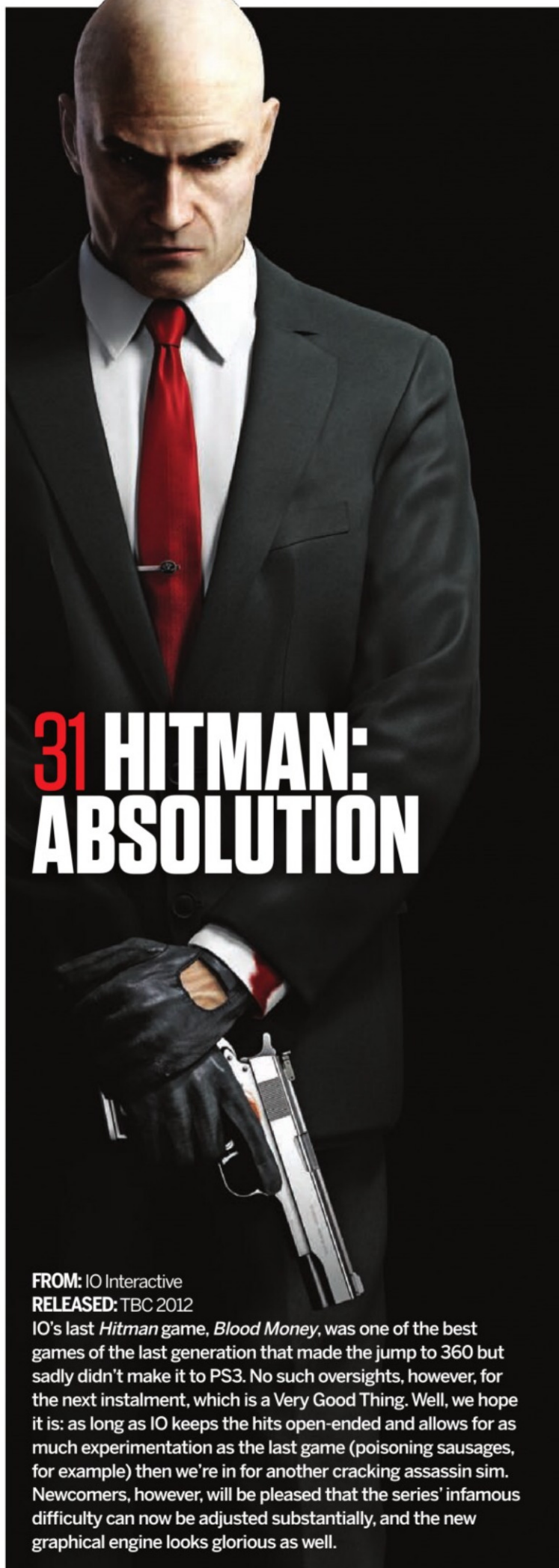


35 FINAL FANTASY VERSUS XIII
FROM: Square Enix 1st Production Department
RELEASED: TBC 2012

36 FINAL FANTASY XIV
FROM: Square Enix Product Development Division 3
RELEASED: December 2012

37 TALES OF GRACES F
FROM: Namco Tales Studio
RELEASED: Summer 2012

38 DISGAEA 3 VITA
FROM: Nippon Ichi
RELEASED: TBC 2012



31 HITMAN: ABSOLUTION

FROM: IO Interactive
RELEASED: TBC 2012

IO's last *Hitman* game, *Blood Money*, was one of the best games of the last generation that made the jump to 360 but sadly didn't make it to PS3. No such oversights, however, for the next instalment, which is a Very Good Thing. Well, we hope it is: as long as IO keeps the hits open-ended and allows for as much experimentation as the last game (poisoning sausages, for example) then we're in for another cracking assassin sim. Newcomers, however, will be pleased that the series' infamous difficulty can now be adjusted substantially, and the new graphical engine looks glorious as well.

34 DEAD SPACE 3

FROM: Visceral Games

RELEASED: Late 2012

We just have one request for the next entry to EA's freak bastard-'em-up: don't bother with online. It was okay last time, but it felt like a phenomenal waste of time.



39 NINJA GAIDEN 3

FROM: Team Ninja

RELEASED: TBC 2012

It's so hard that the developers – *the people who make the game and know it inside out* – struggle to play through the demos they've shown us. Is that a good thing? Yeah, probably.

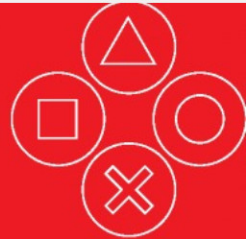


40 BORDERLANDS 2

FROM: Gearbox Software

RELEASED: TBC 2012

The original game came out of seemingly nowhere to cause a huge stir with its open-world, post-apocalyptic vibe and emphasis on customisation and looting. Expect Gearbox to do even better this time around.

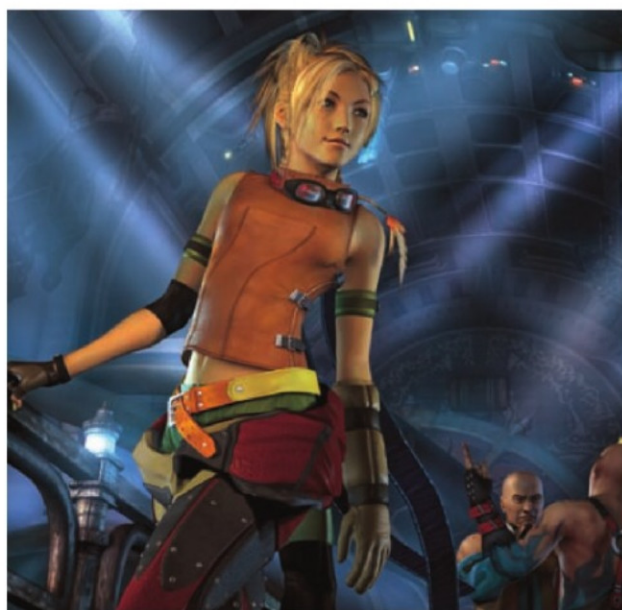


44 BIOSHOCK INFINITE

FROM: Irrational Games **RELEASED:** TBC 2012

Not only will *Infinite* likely be another Something Special just in general – Irrational doesn't make bad games and it's taking its time to make it something special – it'll have something special exclusively on PS3, too. As we've mentioned before, thanks to *Play*'s astounding, all-encompassing

influence *BioShock Infinite* will include Move functionality. We don't know how it'll work, but Ken Levine has reassured all those that worry it might affect the experience that it will only be used in a way that adds to the game. So not just a potentially great game, a reason to give a damn about Move, too? Maybe.



48 FINAL FANTASY X HD

FROM: Square Enix
RELEASED: TBC 2012

A second chance to reappraise what was actually a very good entry to the *Final Fantasy* series, though it does mean we'll have to put up with that awful 'laughing' cutscene again.



53 YAKUZA: DEAD SOULS

FROM: Sega
RELEASED: March 2012

Just think how hard we had to fight to get PS3 exclusive *Yakuza 3* released over here – and now we're getting the zombie-based offshoot without having to ask. Great days.

41 SNIPER ELITE V2

FROM: Rebellion Developments
RELEASED: TBC 2012

42 DUKE NUKEM FOREVER 2

FROM: Gearbox Software
RELEASED: Early 2013

43 SYPHON FILTER 4

FROM: SCE London (rumoured)
RELEASED: Winter 2012



45 WIPEOUT 2048

FROM: SCE Studio Liverpool
RELEASED: February 2012



46 SOUL CALIBUR V

FROM: Project Soul
RELEASED: February 2012

47 JUST CAUSE 3

FROM: Avalanche Studios
RELEASED: TBC 2012



49 LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

FROM: Grasshopper Manufacture
RELEASED: Summer 2012

50 FINAL FANTASY TYPE-0

FROM: Square Enix 1st Production Department
RELEASED: Late 2012

51 SOUND SHAPES

FROM: Queasy Games
RELEASED: TBC 2012

52 DARKSIDERS II

FROM: Vigil Games
RELEASED: June 2012

100 GAMES THAT WILL SAVE PLAYSTATION



54 DEVIL'S THIRD
FROM: Valhalla Game Studios
RELEASED: TBC 2013

55 DRAGON'S CROWN
FROM: Vanillaware
RELEASED: Spring 2012

56 CROSS OF THE DUTCHMAN
FROM: Triangle Studios
RELEASED: Summer 2012



57 PROTOTYPE 2
FROM: Radical Entertainment
RELEASED: TBC 2012

58 FIFA 13
FROM: EA Sports
RELEASED: September 2012

59 NEED FOR SPEED
FROM: Criterion Games
RELEASED: November 2012



61 SILENT HILL DOWNPOUR
FROM: Vatra Games
RELEASED: February 2012

62 TRANSFORMERS: FALL OF CYBERTRON
FROM: High Moon Studios
RELEASED: Autumn 2012



64 SILENT HILL HD COLLECTION
FROM: Konami
RELEASED: February 2012

65 PES 2013
FROM: Konami
RELEASED: October 2012



60 UNCHARTED: GOLDEN ABYSS

FROM: SCE Bend Studio RELEASED: February 2012

Golden Abyss is likely to be the biggest draw for Sony's new handheld and as such, the pressure on it to deliver is pretty darn high. Which also means the pressure on Sony Bend must be astronomical. What we've played so far has showed us it's *Uncharted* by the numbers, but

also as it should be – the jump to handheld will surely be refreshing enough to keep our interest. If the adventure – and, obviously, the game – keep the quality levels as high as Naughty Dog has managed to, this could well be *the* game that makes Vita essential.



63 LITTLEBIGPLANET VITA

FROM: Double Eleven Limited/Tarsier Studios
RELEASED: TBC 2012

LBP plus the ability to modify your surroundings and levels with your fingers makes for an intriguing and unique package. In other words, it makes us excited for *LittleBigPlanet* for the three thousandth time.



66 FINAL FANTASY XIII-2

FROM: Square Enix Product Development Division 1
RELEASED: February 2012

It's the *Final Fantasy* game where the developer has actually listened to the fans and made changes accordingly. As such, it could be a genuinely great *Final Fantasy* game for PS3 to be proud of.

70 METAL GEAR SOLID RISING

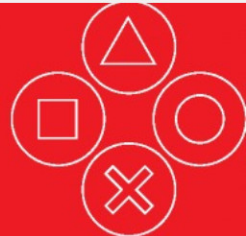


FROM: Kojima Productions
RELEASED: TBC 2012

It's a new *Metal Gear* game! But you play as Raiden! But this time he's super badass like in *MGS 4*! Oh, and now it's all about sword fighting. What?

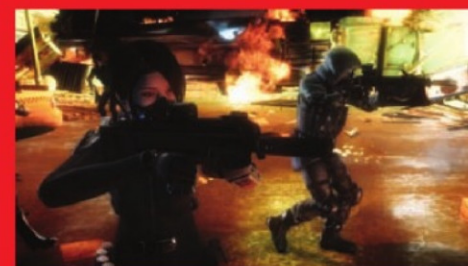
Yeah, we still have no real idea what *Rising* is going to be about other than what we just said, but Kojima Productions is an outrageously talented studio and if anyone can pull off a game that seems at the moment to be mostly about slicing up watermelons then it can. It might not be classic *Metal Gear*, but does anyone want to see Kojima tarnish his legacy by reviving Snake again? He's old and probably eating a Werther's Original somewhere.

54-77



67 TOM CLANCY'S FUTURE SOLDIER
FROM: Ubisoft Paris
RELEASED: March 2012

68 NEW SPIDER-MAN
FROM: Beenox
RELEASED: TBC 2012



69 RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON CITY
FROM: Slant Six
RELEASED: March 2012

71 FIFA STREET
FROM: EA Canada
RELEASED: Early 2012



72 METRO: LAST LIGHT
FROM: 4A Games
RELEASED: TBC 2012

73 ASURA'S WRATH
FROM: CyberConnect 2
RELEASED: February 2012



74 SSX
FROM: EA
RELEASED: February 2012

75 RIDGE RACER UNBOUNDED
FROM: Bugbear
RELEASED: Q1 2012

76 DEAD OR ALIVE 5
FROM: Team Ninja
RELEASED: TBC 2012

77 GOTHAM CITY IMPOSTORS
FROM: Monolith
RELEASED: Q1 2012

100 GAMES THAT WILL SAVE PLAYSTATION



78 NEVERDEAD
FROM: Rebellion Developments
RELEASED: February 2012

79 BINARY DOMAIN
FROM: Sega
RELEASED: Q2 2012

81 WWE '13
FROM: Yuke's Osaka
RELEASED: Q4 2012

82 KANE & LYNCH 3
FROM: IO Interactive
RELEASED: TBC 2013

83 MEDAL OF HONOR 2
FROM: Danger Close
RELEASED: TBC 2012

84 VIRTUA FIGHTER 5: FINAL SHOWDOWN
FROM: Sega
RELEASED: TBC 2012

85 DEAD ISLAND 2
FROM: Techland
RELEASED: TBC 2013



86 RESISTANCE: BURNING SKIES
FROM: Nihilistic Software
RELEASED: Late 2012

87 NBA 2K13
FROM: 2K Sports
RELEASED: Autumn 2012

88 STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN
FROM: Capcom
RELEASED: March 2012



80 CALL OF DUTY 9

FROM: Treyarch
RELEASED: November 2012
Like clockwork, next November will see a new *Call Of Duty* game. Will it be *Black Ops 2*, or something else entirely? We don't know. Do you? If you do can you tell us? We won't tell. Promise.



89 GOD OF WAR IV

FROM: Team Ninja RELEASED: TBC 2012
We haven't had a ridiculously overblown and good-looking rage-'em-up for a while, so it's about time Sony got its backside in gear and gave us more Kratos. Especially after the cop-out ending of *God Of War III*.



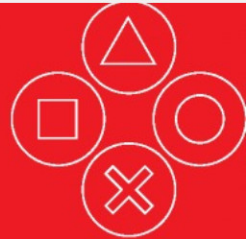
90 DMC

FROM: Ninja Theory
RELEASED: TBC 2012
People hate change. Just ask the fans of *Devil May Cry* when this was announced and Dante had gone all emo. Regardless, this still looks like a good slice of hack-'n'-slashing.



91 THE LAST GUARDIAN

FROM: Team Ico RELEASED: TBC 2012
If one game is going to blow everything else out of the water and automatically make PS3 de facto victor in whatever console wars your tiny fanboy minds have conjured up, it's this one. If one game is going to have other, more pretentious publications gushing on about games as art and the cultural significance of the PS3, it's this one. If one game is going to save the PS3, make the world a better place, cure all diseases, end world hunger and cease all wars, it's this one. Then again, it might turn out to be a festering pile of chicken-dog poo.



93 NI NO KUNI

FROM: Level-5/Studio Ghibli **RELEASED:** TBC 2012

Some things are needed in the life cycle of a console, and one of those things (that is needed) is a game that can make people who don't normally play games play games. That makes sense. *Ni No Kuni* will combine the RPG mastery of Level-5 with the animation and life-affirming awesomeness of Studio Ghibli, meaning we have rather high hopes for it. Namco Bandai's announcement that it was to bring the game to European (and US) shores wasn't totally unexpected, but it's still good news to have and – above all else – at least it's something a bit different.



94 METAL GEAR SOLID HD COLLECTION

FROM: Bluepoint Games

RELEASED: February 2012

Contains one of the most hyped sequels of all time, one of the best games of all time, and one of the PSP's top titles all in 'mega up-res-o-vision'. If you don't buy this you're a fool.



95 RAINBOW SIX: PATRIOTS

FROM: Ubisoft

RELEASED: Late 2012

Now they've spent all their money in Vegas (our memory of the storyline is... fuzzy), the *Rainbow Six* crew are back. *Patriots* looks like a more mature take on the squad series.

AGENT

92 AGENT

FROM: Rockstar North

RELEASED: TBC 2013

Mystery surrounds this Seventies-set spy game from the developer of *GTAs III* to *V*. It was an exclusive and we sure hope it still is as this could be brilliant. Could. *Maybe*.

96 TRUE CRIME

FROM: United Front

RELEASED: TBC 2012

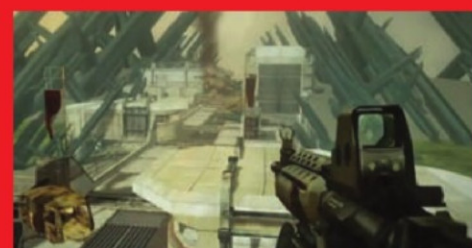
Risen from the dead after being canned by Activision when it was nearly finished, sources suggest that this open-world, cop-based Hong Kong-'em-up is actually decent.

97 ASSASSIN'S CREED III

FROM: Ubisoft Montreal

RELEASED: Q4 2012

Another year, another *Assassin's Creed* game. *Revelations* wasn't great: we hope this is better. A change of time period will help the series no end.



98 KILLZONE VITA

FROM: SCE Studios Cambridge

RELEASED: Late 2012

We'd expect this to be an FPS, what with Vita's twin-sticks negating the need to do another *Liberation*-like portable game. All the same, that wouldn't be an unwelcome sort of game either.



99 TWISTED METAL

FROM: Eat Sleep Play

RELEASED: February 2012

'Delayed to add more polish to the experience' is the sort of thing we dread hearing. Unless we actually asked for that to happen, like with *Twisted Metal*. Here's hoping.



100 GAMES THAT WILL
SAVE PLAYSTATION

EVERYTHING
YOU NEED TO
KNOW ABOUT

MASS EFFECT 3



● Taking cover and smart shooting is the best way to get through the game. Or just spamming powers whenever they're available, that works, too.

Much like the Assassin's Creed series, multiplayer is making its way into the third instalment of Mass Effect, though whether BioWare can execute it as masterfully as their Canadian brethren remains to be seen

GALAXY AT WAR

Right from the beginning, the keyword being attached to the *Mass Effect* co-op mode is 'optional.' "*Mass Effect 3* is a complete standalone game that will deliver a satisfying story experience even if you choose not to try multiplayer," writes BioWare community coordinator Chris Priestly. "The *Mass Effect 3*: Galaxy At War system and all of the individual components are meant to complement that amazing game and can be enjoyed on their own or as part of the Galaxy At War experience."

As the title suggests, Galaxy At War focuses on the larger conflict happening all around Commander Shepard. The focal point of Galaxy At War is the 'Galactic Readiness' level, which will directly determine the outcome in the final battle of Shepard's crew versus the Reapers. By earning War Assets players will be able to unlock new allies, fleets, and even facilities such as radar stations, all of which can be placed strategically throughout the galaxy in preparation for the grand finale.

ALL 4 ONE?

Since Shepard will be off doing what he/she does best and shagging aliens of various colours, you will need to make an entirely new, custom character for the multiplayer mode. The four-player co-op mode is host to a number

of firsts for the *Mass Effect* series, not least of which is the ability to choose from different races. Krogan, asari and even drell (the same race as Thane), among others, are available. Your character will also get to choose from one of the familiar classes available to Shepard.

If you guessed that 'four-player co-op' essentially meant 'Horde mode from *Gears Of War*', then you'd be correct. Your 'elite Special Forces squad' will venture to one of several battlegrounds throughout the galaxy and fend off 11 waves of enemies in order to liberate these key territories from enemy control. Foes will range from foot soldiers to giant mechs, though hopefully there's more than just recycled single-player content. The level cap for multiplayer is 20, and building up your character(s) as well as finishing co-op missions will all work towards improving the Galactic Readiness level.

Galaxy At War is an ambitious and intriguing concept meant to supplement the single-player story, and it will undoubtedly do just that for certain gamers, but it seems more than a little ill-conceived. What happens when you want to press forward with single-player but can't because you haven't played enough multiplayer?

Or, what happens when you've beaten the game and you no longer give a piss what happens to the galaxy, theoretically rendering multiplayer pointless? Regardless of how good it is, there are a number of factors where it can go wrong in its current state. For those who prefer to focus on single-player, it's entirely possible to achieve the best possible ending without ever even touching multiplayer, though it sounds like that would be akin to trying to beat a Facebook game in a weekend without having to pay for 'moar stamina!!!'

WHAT'S NEXT?

BioWare has officially acknowledged plans for downloadable content, though nothing has been revealed outside of the robotic dog pet, bonus character, appearance pack, and N7 Arsenal add-on, all of which are included with the Collector's Edition of the game. Given the phenomenal post-release support for *Mass Effect 2*, however, chances are we'll see some sizeable DLC, especially now that multiplayer's involved. "We really just want to get *Mass Effect 3* done and get it out there," says BioWare Edmonton general manager Aaryn Flynn. "We'll see what the future will be then. There are trends in the industry that are pulling us forward. Once we've done *Mass Effect 3* we'll have a sit-down, get a blank sheet of paper with a bunch of great people and say, 'Okay, what's the next evolution of this franchise?'" >

“We're lucky that when you've got millions of fans out there who play your games, you'll have some people who will jump in with something that starts off concern”

BioWare's Aaryn Flynn on the mixed reaction to the multiplayer mode



MASS EFFECT 2

RELEASED: January 21st 2001

The first game in the series to come out on PS3 came with an interactive comic to fill in for the decisions you missed out on in its predecessor



● *Mass Effect 3* won't focus on building a team and taking them to the endgame in the way that *Mass Effect 2* did.



Play grills executive producer Casey Hudson about some of the more 'questionable' decisions in the upcoming blockbuster

1 In multiplayer, you have three powers aligned to hot keys and the power wheel is removed, to keep the pace high

2 A lot of the tension is created by knowing you could permanently lose any of the squad members, explains Casey Hudson

3 You won't play as Commander Shepard in multiplayer but instead you'll play as humans, salarians, turians, krogan and drell

> In *Mass Effect* you could go to different planets and explore those to a limited extent. And then in *Mass Effect 2* that was replaced by resource gathering (though both were equally underdeveloped and obnoxious). What's the next phase of that for *Mass Effect 3*?

It's going to be similar to *Mass Effect 2* in that you'll still have the larger galaxy out there, you'll still be able to go out and look at different planets and try and find other missions that are there, that aren't necessarily just given to you by the story. There are planets out there and things to do. The difference is that in *Mass Effect 3*, it's all about this larger Galaxy At War. The idea of mining for resources doesn't really make sense in the context of war, that's more of a passive thing to do, but here, everything that you're doing in exploring the galaxy and going to different planets, you're looking for survivors, you're looking to help out in battles. It's a different take on what we did with *Mass Effect 2*. You're not mining for minerals any more, but you are looking for new battles to have, facilities you can secure. Even other

things that you can find, that you can then sell or bring back to people that find value in them and stuff like that. It's not about trying to get lots of platinum and Element Zero.

Will the Hammerhead and/or the Mako be making a return?

Ah, the vehicles. Yeah, we're not doing those two vehicles, but we are doing some other types of sequences. One of the ones we've been talking about is the Atlas. It's a vehicle that the enemies use, it's a big mech that an actual Cerberus trooper will control. There are ways that you can take control away from the guy and actually take control of the Atlas. We've got some other sequences that are different from the kind of gameplay we've done before. But we're not bringing back the Mako or the Hammerhead for this one.

Fans are kind of fond of their vehicle of choice. Why did you remove those two from the final game?

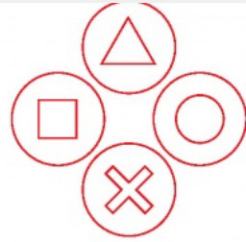
Well, we didn't have a vehicle in *Mass Effect 2* either, the Hammerhead came with DLC. Anything's possible in DLC for *Mass Effect 3* as well. Ultimately, the reason we didn't have a vehicle in *Mass Effect 2* was, the Mako was the number one thing that we had negative feedback for in *Mass Effect*. So, naturally, either we would have to invest tremendous resources into making it better, or given the negative feedback on it... it didn't seem like it was worth bringing it back. And it was only once it wasn't there that the people that liked it became vocal about the fact that it

was gone. It was one of those things where sometimes it's difficult to interpret feedback. But what we realised is that anything that takes players off of the extremely rich, cinematic narrative of Commander Shepard's experience is where we get mixed feedback. Even when we have light content that is fun and interesting and some people like it, that's usually where we get the mixed feedback. More and more, we're trying to hone in on an experience that's really rich and entertaining from beginning to end.

We know that the crew list has been whittled down from what was available in *Mass Effect 2*. Can you talk about who the confirmed crew members are, and how you go about choosing who's in and who's out?

One thing that we don't want to do is talk about... a lot of people ask us, who are the permanent squad members? But the idea of permanence in a war story... if we were to say, 'okay, here are the characters that are in the game from beginning to end and we assure you that they won't die at some point', that would really run counter to the idea of setting up tension in a war story. It would be like the producers saying, 'here's a list of characters that will be there for the entire series'. Then you say, 'okay, well, none of these guys are gonna die'. That is, in fact, a lot of the interest in the *Mass Effect 3* story. It's not so much about building a team and then taking them into the endgame, the way that *Mass Effect 2* was. It literally is about a narrative that twists and turns through a larger war story.

100. MASS EFFECT 3



FACEBOOK AND BEYOND

Apparently enjoying a fine bit of success from its much-hyped *Dragon Age II: Legacy* Facebook app, BioWare has revealed plans to extend the Galaxy At War system beyond the PlayStation 3. Other "platforms," including Facebook, will all feature some component of Galaxy At War content that allows users to affect their Galactic Readiness in a way that "makes sense," according to community coordinator Chris Priestly. If you've just released a collective sigh and/or eye-roll as we originally did, remember that the key word in all of this is 'optional'.

The people that you get, you're fortunate to have them for the time that you have them, and you're worried that you might not be able to keep them, they might not survive. That becomes part of the tension in the story.

You've previously mentioned *Band Of Brothers*, and one of the distinct differences between a TV show and a game, especially an RPG like *Mass Effect*, is the evolution, the role-playing aspect, where you're building up your characters, you're customising them, you're increasing their stats or whatever. So how do you balance building these characters up if you're only going to lose them and replace them with someone else? How do you carry over that progression?

I would say that it's similar to *Mass Effect* in that sense. There were characters that you didn't have to have, there were characters that came more in the middle of the story than at the beginning, there were characters that die in the middle. It's similar to *Mass Effect*. When a character joins you they come at a certain level, you build them up, make choices about how they progress, but... I think we've said this in the past regarding *Mass Effect 3*, some people have gone totally to the other end of the spectrum and assumed that players have no choice in who joins them, you get somebody for a brief time, everybody's a cameo. That's not at all what it is. It is more towards what we did with *Mass Effect*, except that we wouldn't have come out in *Mass Effect*... it was the first game, people weren't asking us this particular question,

but we would never say that Wrex is one of the permanent squad members because it's not true, he's there for a while and then he could die. There's some of that in this story as well. It's interesting, because as you get towards the latter part of the series, there are a lot of assumptions about how things are supposed to work. 'Okay, show me my roster of characters, tell me who my romances are, give me the whole stat summary of what I'm in for.' You never really ask those questions of the first game because you're wondering what it is, there's so much discovery. We want to make sure that players have that same sense of discovery when they embark on *Mass Effect 3*.

Speaking of death, what if one of your crew members died in *Mass Effect 2*, will they just be replaced by another character in *Mass Effect 3*? There's always an alternative? Or will a chunk of the game just not be available?

I'll say that there will always be differences. But again, it's not something where the characters become systemic and therefore for every character we do an exact process, the same for one character versus another. It's a lot more about writing a story and finding places where characters are relevant and important to the kind of story we're telling. Places where characters are more appropriate as minor supporting characters. They're all involved in different parts of the story, so they're not interchangeable systemically. The differences that you'll

Anything's possible in DLC for Mass Effect 3 as well

Executive producer **Casey Hudson**

see, between whether a character is alive or dead, are different per character. Sometimes similar things will happen, but in different ways. Sometimes a character being alive will add a piece of content, sometimes a character being dead will add a piece of content. But it really is all different per character, because ultimately it all has to work inside a story, versus making the story sort of procedural and thus generic because all the characters need to be treated in a systemic way. >

4 We've yet to see how combat in single-player will play out this time round but if multiplayer is any indication, it'll be a slicker, faster-paced game





● Playing as different classes in multiplayer grants you different abilities – the athletic drell can cartwheel out of the way of danger.

> Whenever we're choosing which characters to go into a mission with, we always want just one more. Did you ever consider doing four squad members? Why is three the magic number?

The reason we used three is because... first of all, the reason we have squad members at all is because one of the things we try to capture is the idea of a shared experience. If you play a lot of typical first-person shooters or third-person shooters, you experience amazing things, but you're not necessarily around someone else. I think everyone's realising that it's a good idea to have other characters around. And often, in really well-told stories like the *Uncharted* games, for example, they'll pair you up with somebody so that the characters can bounce lines off each other and have a shared reaction to what they're going through. That's really important, and that's why we have a squad in the first place. But the more characters you add... games are always about limits and balance in terms of development. Every squad member that you add means one less enemy that you can fight. Or it means less graphical detail or it means less memory, slower performance. Every character that you have is a penalty in terms of the time the CPU spends doing their pathfinding. Every character that you add takes up more

S Enemies come in different shapes and sizes this time, rather than the occasional stompy robot seen in *Mass Effect 2*

G Hopefully changing your ammo type will have a tangible effect on combat rather than the slight performance enhancement we've already seen

real estate on the GUI, because you have to represent who they are and what they're doing. And it takes a lot more management for the player to set their weapons, give them squad commands. You start to lose some nice symmetries about how you can do that sort of stuff. If you have two, for example, then you can say that things on the left side of the controls are for one character and things on the right side of the controls are for the other character. It becomes more and more complex as you add more characters. If we had four or five or six, then you're losing a lot of the elegance of the interface, the GUI, and you're also losing things in terms of... instead of fighting five enemies at a time, and it's three on five, it would be four on four, or you'd run around with eight guys and you're fighting one. It's all about trade-offs. We could do more, but three is kind of a magic number. When you have one character there's nobody to talk to. You're just by yourself. With two, now you have a shared experience, but it doesn't feel like a group, there can be no tension in the group and you can't talk to one person about the other and stuff. Three is the first time you actually have the sensation of adventuring with a group. But after that, the benefits are diminishing, and the weight and cost of it starts dramatically going up. That's where it becomes not worth it in terms of game design, so that's why we use three.

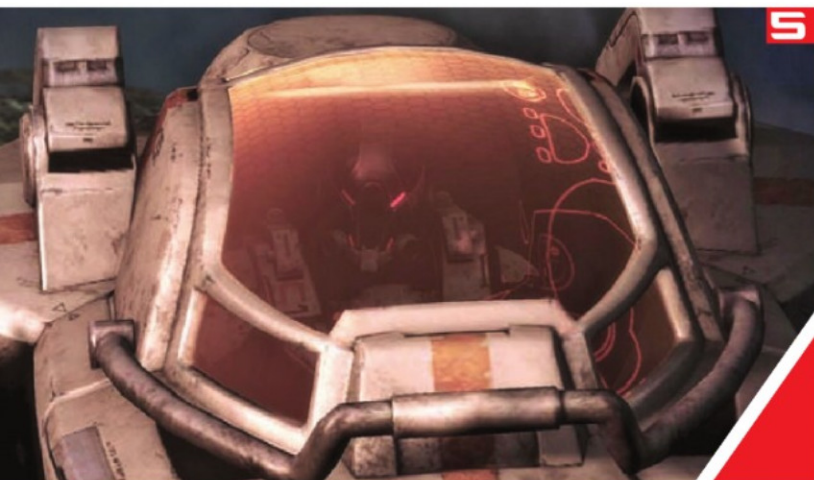
With the Facebook poll and everything, we wanted to talk about Fem-Shep... Her and Ashley and others are kind of sporting a sexier look now. Is the classic Fem-Shep model still available in *Mass Effect 3*?

I believe we're still making it available as one of the presets. But obviously if you're playing that character, that character will already be the one that you import. If that was your *Mass Effect 2* character then you'll just import that character and you'll look the way that you looked in previous games. Plus, you'll be able to then make adjustments. You could do that in *Mass Effect 2*,

but you couldn't adjust from where you left off. We're planning to do that for *Mass Effect 3*.

One of the things that always struck us about the *Mass Effect* series is that it's meant to be open-ended. Your Commander Shepard is not this one or other person, your Commander Shepard is what you make it, whether it's male or female or what the back story is or whether it has blond or red hair or whatever. And yet, there kind of is this canon Shepard that's always been in the marketing and the commercials and that's always the male Shepard. What's BioWare's stance on giving players this open-ended route they can take in defining who Shepard is, and then kind of reversing that and saying, this is what Shepard is?

I think it's really straightforward, really. In general people get the idea of it, which is that... you can make your character anything that you want, but when you show a trailer of what you experience in *Mass Effect*, if we had a different character in every trailer and you saw a whole bunch of action and gunfights and space battles and it starred a red-haired female character, and then in the next one it's a dark-haired guy, and then the next time we do a screenshot it's somebody else, somebody else, somebody else, then it's very hard for us to present a consistent way of saying, 'what you're looking at is *Mass Effect*.' So if you're making a movie, or you're making a *Halo* game for that matter, or any videogame that has a single character, Nathan Drake, Master Chief, one of the things that helps in terms of presenting who you get to be as the character, and specifically the kinds of experiences that you will be in, is that you can see who is in these cut-scenes and trailers and stuff. Even if we do a CG movie like we did with *Mass Effect 2*, as part of a commercial, if it's a different character every time, then it becomes really





unclear who's who. Am I this person, or this person? So yeah, we pick just one character, and it's not too much of a stretch to say, 'yeah, that's the situation that I'll be in, that's the kind of experience that I'll have, but I'm going to make my character however I like.'

Do you think that the character you chose to represent *Mass Effect* is sort of like the default, the majority, the one that most *Mass Effect* players will resonate with?

Well, obviously that was the intent. But again, you have to pick something. No matter what we pick, it can't possibly represent everything all at once, it can't be all things to all people. It has to be one person. So we chose someone that we thought represented the experience, not literally who we expect you to be. You use the word 'canon,' that's actually a word that we never use on the team. Your canon, the only canon that exists to us in creating the game, is the decisions that you make as a player when you're playing. The character on the box is not the canon character. It's our iconic marketing representative of Commander Shepard, who represents the Commander Shepard experience in screenshots and trailers and stuff. But there is no canon Shepard, there is no canon decision. People say, 'is the canon storyline that the Council survived *Mass Effect*?' There is no canon. There's the default, if you haven't played the previous games, we pick a default because you have to pick something. But that default, and the

default character, definitely doesn't represent 'canon.' And that's important, because we do... I think we're probably the only fictional property in the world that does proper, true, trans-media storytelling, where if you play the game and make all kinds of interactive choices and then you read a graphic novel for *Mass Effect* or you read one of the novels, comic books, those things will never contradict what you did in the game. There is no canon decision from Commander Shepard.

Okay, now for the most important question. In *Mass Effect 2*, pretty much every character hit on our Fem-Shep except for the one we wanted – Miranda. Is there any chance she might be open to experimenting this time around, especially considering everyone's going to die?

[laughs] Well, see, that's another thing that can... in an interactive story, imagine the experience that we're trying to capture. When we're creating a romance story, what is the experience of exploring a romance story interactively, or in real life for that matter? It's wondering whether a certain person is interested in you, or could become interested in you. In any movie or book, and in real life, that is the tension and the excitement around a love story. So can you imagine how much it would deflate anything we're trying to achieve in the narrative if we came out and said, 'okay, we're posting the roster of everyone that's available to you as love interests.' There's almost no point in writing and then having players play the game if you know that certain things are going to happen if you press a button. So we're going to have to leave those things for players to discover in the game. ⊗

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

To provide two full-fledged modes, BioWare established a Montreal-based studio in 2010 specifically to develop the Galaxy At War side of *Mass Effect 3*. Priestly explains: "A dedicated team from our recently formed [studio] has been focused on creating the multiplayer game features while the main game continued to be developed by the team in BioWare Edmonton. Both teams are integrated under the same leadership group that produced *Mass Effect* and *Mass Effect 2*. BioWare remains dedicated to delivering one of the most amazing single-player campaigns gamers have ever experienced."



VALUE FOR MONEY

PLAY'S GUIDE TO 2011'S BEST VALUE GAMES

WITH SO MANY GREAT RELEASES THIS YEAR, WE RUN THROUGH THE GAMES THAT OFFER THE MOST BANG FOR YOUR HARD-EARNED BUCK

LITTLEBIGPLANET 2

Publisher: Sony
Pay no more than: £20
Hours of play: 20+

The game is brilliant but the real replay value comes from creating, tinkering and playing the custom levels.

★★★★★

PORTAL 2

Publisher: EA
Pay no more than: £25
Hours of play: 15

Co-op makes up for the relatively short life span of the single-player and it remains one of the best games released this year.

★★★★★

DARK SOULS

Publisher: Namco Bandai
Pay no more than: £35
Hours of play: 40

The Hardest Game Ever Made EVER, *Dark Souls* might not be a huge game but it makes progress through its world slow.

★★★★★

MASS EFFECT 2

Publisher: EA
Pay no more than: £15
Hours of play: 45

Demands a second replay just to revisit the decisions you didn't make the first time round and has tons of DLC.

★★★★★



DEAD ISLAND

Publisher: Deep Silver
Pay no more than: £35
Hours of play: 18+

Dead Island doesn't really take long to complete if all you want to do is reach its finale. Should you want to dig deeper, you'll discover that Techland's game has an insane amount of side-quests, easily tripling the time it takes to finish.

★★★★★

“FOR THOSE AFTER A CHALLENGE: DARK SOULS MAKES YOU LEARN AND LOVE EVERY INCH OF ITS METICULOUSLY CRAFTED WORLD”



“ FOR TROPHY HUNTERS: L.A. NOIRE AND DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION ARE EASILY THE BEST CHOICES IN OUR LIST ”

DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

Publisher: Namco Bandai

Pay no more than: £18

Hours of play: 25+

One of the longest first-person shooters in recent memory and it'll take even longer if you want to start cleaning up the surprisingly tough Trophies, too.

★★★★★

L.A. NOIRE

Publisher: Rockstar

Pay no more than: £30

Hours of play: 50+

Consider the replay value from missed missions along with the golden reel and find all vehicle Trophies and this will last ages.

★★★★★

DRAGON AGE II

Publisher: EA

Pay no more than: £10

Hours of play: 24

With BioWare still churning out the DLC, this is cheap without feeling stale or taking shortcuts on the quality side.

★★★★★



“ FOR THOSE ONLINE: DEAD ISLAND IS INFINITELY MORE FUN AND LASTS FAR LONGER WHEN PLAYED WITH FRIENDS ”

DEAD SPACE 2

Publisher: EA

Pay no more than: £14

Hours of play: 20

Crank it up to the harder difficulties and the eight hours of your initial playthrough is bolstered to over 20. Still excellent and great value too.

★★★★★

TOMB RAIDER TRILOGY

Publisher: Square Enix

Pay no more than: £15

Hours of play: 28

What better value for money than three games on one disc? Interestingly, the best game of the bunch in terms of longevity is Anniversary, a remake of the original.

★★★★★

Your favourite magazines n



3D Artist



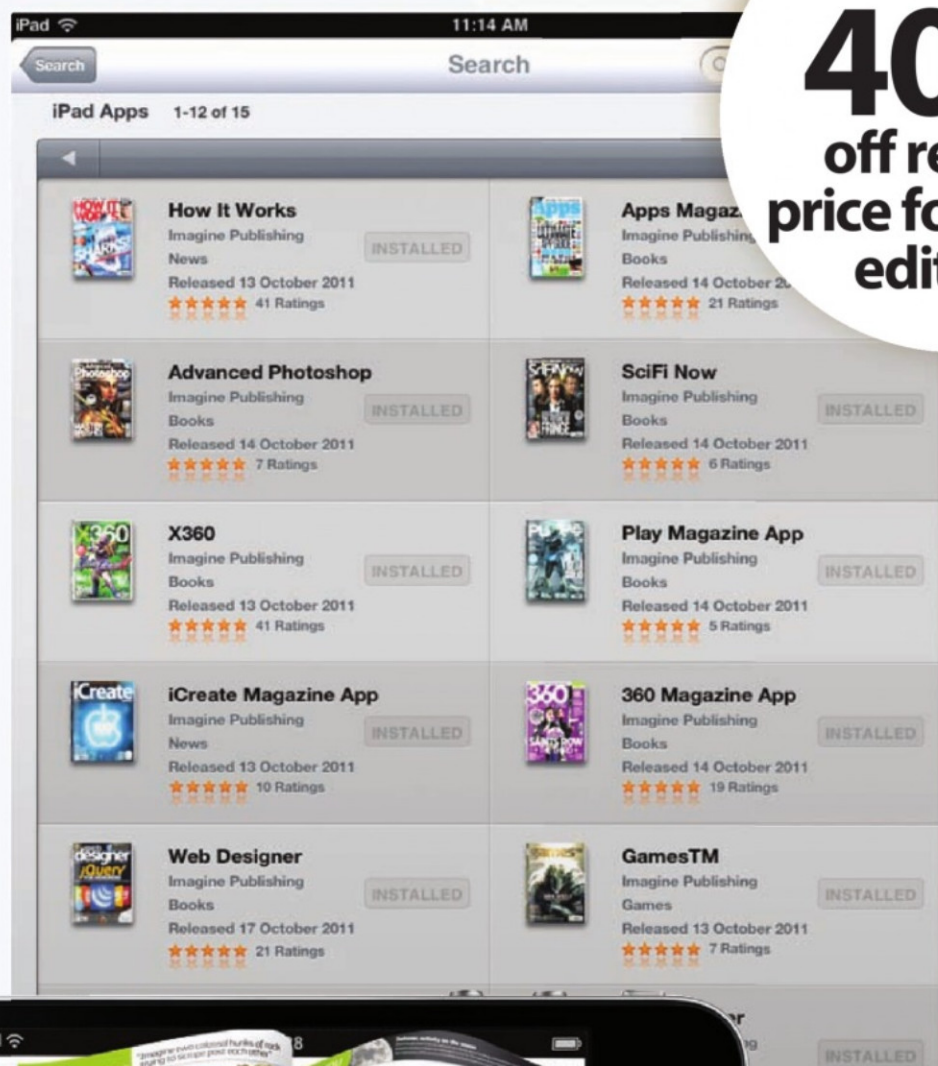
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PLAY MAG Preview

点検

Playing bad games so you don't have to

Including: SSX slides into mediocrity? /// Ridge Racer: Unbounded – worthy reinvention? /// Final Fantasy X HD puts on its HD lip gloss



56 Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City

We don't think Steve liked this much

Preview

48 SSX PS3

We're underwhelmed by SSX. If we told you why here, that would make the preview pointless.

52 RIDGE RACER: UNBOUNDED PS3

This has quietly slipped onto our Quiet Radar wearing a 'Quiet' T-shirt and is quietly beeping.

54 FINAL FANTASY X HD PS3

It was one of the best RPGs on PlayStation 2 so will it be one of the best on PS3? Hmmm.

56 RE: OPERATION RACCOON CITY PS3

Steve liked this as much as a dog likes cabbage, or a tree likes spoilt milk with its cold chips.

58 DARKSIDERS II PS3

Witness! A developer Q&A where they dare to have fun with the answers. Good man.

60 FIFA FOOTBALL PSV

Calm down, it's the Vita version, we're not six months behind everyone else with a PS3 preview.

61 DRAGON'S DOGMA PS3

It still doesn't have multiplayer. We'll keep asking. Capcom will break eventually!

62 PROTOTYPE 2 PS3

Do you like gore? Do you like destroying cities? Do you like good games? Then read this!

64 THE DARKNESS II PS3

It now has a comic style so it looks more like the comics which also had a comic style, see?

66 PREVIEW ROUNDUP PS3

Here are some other games we just about found room for. They didn't deserve more room.



48 SSX PS3

Slight air of disappointment here...



52 Ridge Racer: Unbounded PS3

Reinventing Ridge Racer, not wheel



62 Prototype 2 PS3

Gory city-stomper checks in

Get in touch!

Have your say by shouting your thoughts via...



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You can find us avoiding work at facebook.com/PlayMagUK, shhhh



YouTube

Lots of trailers that may or may not feature dubstep at youtube.com/PlayMagUK



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Home of our blogs and opinions, check in at play-mag.co.uk

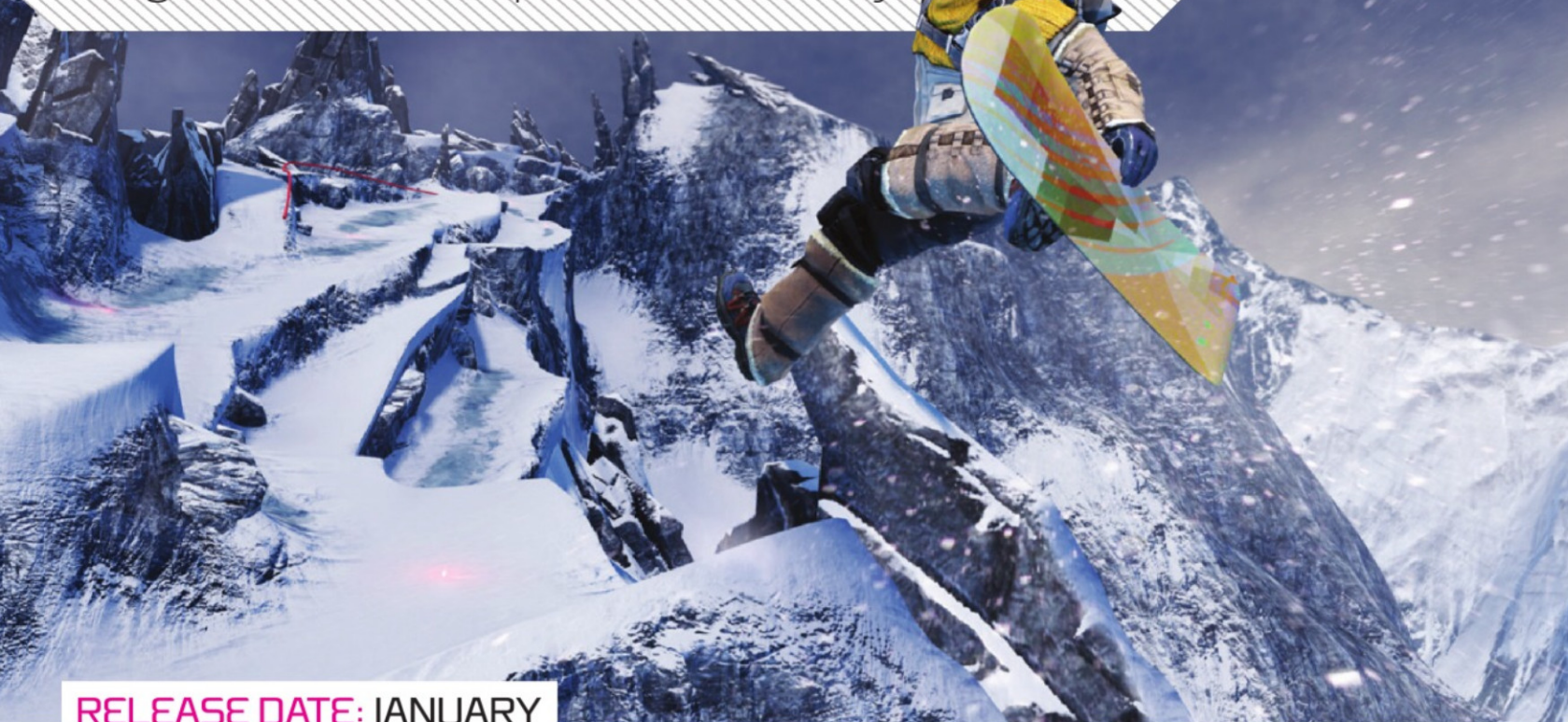


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Ridiculous giveaways and insane rambling at twitter.com/PlayMag_UK

PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



RELEASE DATE: JANUARY

SSX

EA's beloved extreme snowboarding franchise is back... or is it?

PS3

Earlier this year we sat down with a producer from Volition and grilled him on why the developer seemingly stripped everything that made *Red Faction: Guerrilla* so successful out of the then-upcoming *Red Faction: Armageddon*. After all, *Guerrilla* was an awesome, open-world, blow-up-everything adventure that put the dusty *Red Faction* franchise on the map again, and somehow the developer decided it would make the sequel non-linear with about ten per cent as much stuff to destroy and... giant... alien... bugs?! Needless to say, the producer had a hard time validating his company's decision, and shortly thereafter *Red Faction* publisher THQ announced that the franchise would be indefinitely shelved due to *Armageddon*'s abysmal sales.

Fast-forward seven months and we're sitting down with EA

Canada, playing the new *SSX* (no longer subtitled '*Deadly Descents*'), thinking the same exact thing. Anyone who has been following the latest *SSX* title knows that it was revealed last year to overwhelmingly negative feedback by fans, and deservedly so; as feared, there's barely a trace of the over-the-top tracks, tricks and atmosphere that the franchise was built on. The developer even actively admits that it's "toned it down" to be a more realistic experience built around exploration, but is that really what it thinks people want?

Using NASA-borrowed geomapping technology, EA Canada has generated over 25 peaks and 100 different routes for players to explore. While that number may sound impressive, it's essentially hiding the fact that it let a computer do all the hard work. The new courses are touted as being more open-ended and

realistic than in previous games, but this does not translate to being more fun. Whereas earlier *SSX* titles had carefully crafted (yet still impressively large) slopes intertwining massive jumps, half-pipes, rails and shortcuts, the new game's terrain isn't nearly as smooth or, more importantly, enjoyable. It's like it copied and pasted it directly out of the *NASA* software and then slapped some ramps on it.

Although racing and tricking are still a part of the game, a new survival aspect has also been added. During these segments players will be granted a wingsuit (along with other unrevealed gear) that allows them to glide over giant chasms. It may sound cool on paper, but in execution it's disappointingly wonky. The wingsuit does not feel right and the on-display survival course was so poorly designed that even the EA

Canada crew were having trouble making it past the first jump, repeatedly abusing the new rewind feature to bring their fallen boarder back from the abyss. Obviously the game is still in development, but you would think with all the emphasis being put on the survival elements that they'd be a bit more polished (or even functional) three months from launch.

As devout *SSX* aficionados, we have to call shenanigans. This is not an *SSX* game. Despite the *SSX* name, characters and the fact that, yes, it is a snowboarding game, the new *SSX* does a poorer job at maintaining the spirit of its successors than *Fallout 3* or the new *X-COM*, and it's not even a first-person shooter. It actually looks and feels more like a modern follow-up to Nintendo's *1080° Snowboarding*, and, while some gamers may enjoy that, we feel safe speaking for the majority of disappointed *SSX* fans when we say screw the realism: we want ridiculous uber-tricks, neon-colored corkscrews and giant cathead balloons. >

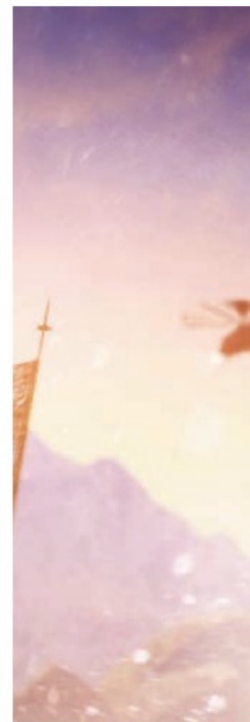
SSX is being developed by EA Canada. Check the official site for new trailers: www.ea.com/ssx

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ No skiing.
- ❑ Familiar faces like Elise and Kaori return.
- ❑ We haven't had a snowboarding game in a while now, have we?
- ❑ Did someone say 'wingsuit'?!

READ ME

SSX will be the first game in the snowboarding franchise to be released on PlayStation 3, with the original *SSX* coming to PS2 in 2000.

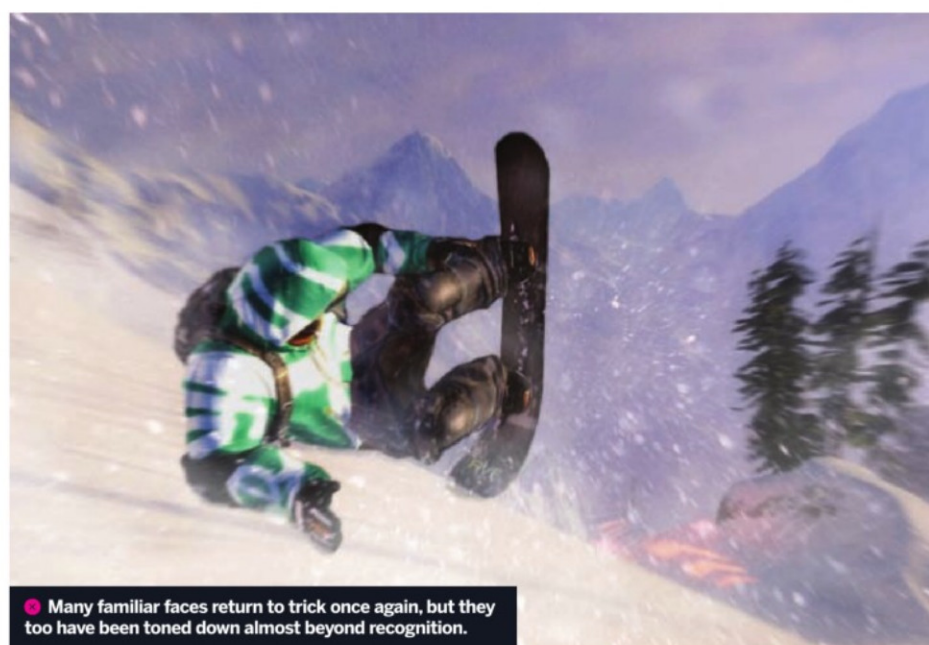




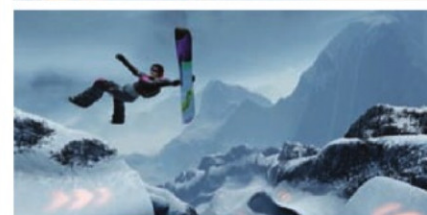
● Uber tricks return, but in a decidedly less 'uber' form than before...



● The toned-down visuals give the environments a somewhat intentionally bland feel compared to previous games.



● Many familiar faces return to trick once again, but they too have been toned down almost beyond recognition.



BACK FROM THE VOID

Wingin' it

PRESUMABLY KNOWING THAT the 'survive it' aspect of the game would be half-baked at best, EA Canada has implemented a rewind feature that allows players to turn back the time on botched tricks or otherwise fatal accidents. The use of the rewind ability will be limited, though the devs haven't finalised how, exactly. While useful in any mode, the rewind function is a downright necessity in the survival segments; the shoddy wingsuit controls and ill-conceived map layout will frustrate even the most seasoned SSX player. Admittedly, we've only seen the Patagonia stage, but we didn't like it.

WE HAVE GOTTEN AWAY FROM THE FLASHY APPROACH



GEOFF COATES
Art director

Art director Geoff Coates has been behind the evolution of SSX's iconic art style since the beginning. **Play** sat down with Coates to talk about the series' biggest change yet, and the questionable move away from the over-the-top aesthetics and gameplay that SSX was built on

Can you give a brief history of your work on the SSX series?

I've worked on pretty much every SSX in the past. SSX, the first one, SSX Tricky, SSX 3, SSX On Tour. And then before that it was a lot of *Triple Play Baseball*.

Were you responsible for the overall UI design of *On Tour*, the sketchbook kind of thing?

(Laughs) Yeah.

A lot of people really liked that. You actually started a trend.

I'm glad you noticed that we were first. We were pretty proud of that. And we did start noticing it in other games afterwards.

It's died down a little bit since.

It was a look for a while, for sure.

But it was good, *On Tour* kind of nailed it, it made sense with the hip

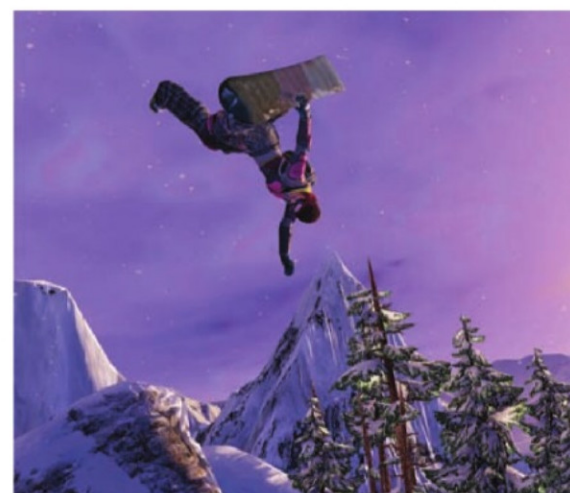
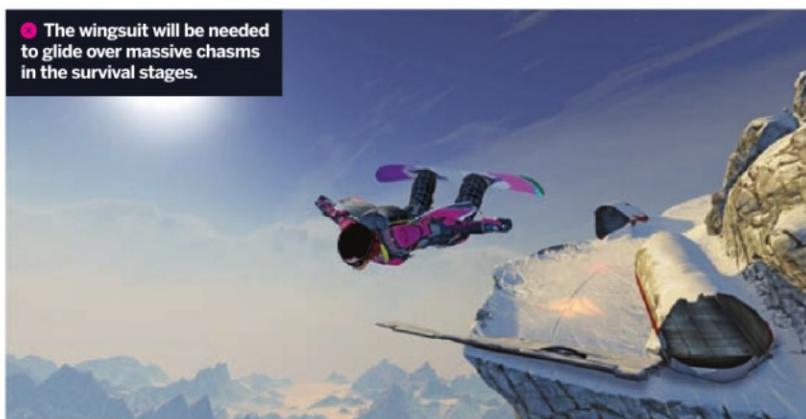
snowboarder feel. Obviously, you're no stranger to creating a unique identity for SSX. So what is it for this one?

Really, there's the three pillars of the game, which are 'race it', 'trick it' and 'survive it'. The 'survive it' aspect is something that's a new vibe for the game. You will see it in the character design, you'll see it in the track design. We have gotten away from a lot of the over-the-top, the crowds, the gates, the sort of flashy approach to the tracks. It's really about creating more of a wild, natural experience.

We're aware that a lot of fans have noticed the more realistic approach. We're sure you guys see a wide spectrum of feedback, but generally it seems to be primarily negative reactions from fans. SSX Tricky seems to be the most popular game in the series, and yet this new SSX seems to be the furthest thing from Tricky.

I think that we've emphasised the 'survive it' aspect of the game, and some fans have really reacted to that. But I think what they're going to see more of, as we get closer to launch, is that it's really just a component of the game. The 'race it' and the 'trick it' are still really key components to it, and to the sensibility of the game, as well as the playability. The 'survive it' is just an aspect that we add to that, to help differentiate it. So I think fans... Even the ones who are reacting to that overall sort of feel to the game, they're going to be pretty happy with what we end up with.

● The wingsuit will be needed to glide over massive chasms in the survival stages.





A lot of the characters – a lot of the iconic characters – are back, and they're kind of redesigned again, with the more realistic approach. Having worked on the entire franchise, what were some of the things you liked doing with Elise and Kaori and the others? What did you get to do this time that maybe you hadn't done in the past?

Well, one of the really cool things was just being able to upgrade the visuals overall for those characters. That's just being on the next generation of consoles. So there was that. The other thing was, the really cool challenge was trying to retain their personality, and still bring them into a more realistic sort of look. In the past you would see Psymon going down the hill in a tank top, other guys just wearing T-shirts and jeans going down these insane slopes. Now we have gear that's more appropriate to the terrain that we're in, to help reinforce that feel. So while we still have that, you still get to see the character, their personality still shines through. And that's actually been a cool sort of challenge to work with.

SSX Tricky proudly touted its celebrity voice actors. How did you feel about that, having that as part of the game and the characters? Is that something you plan to carry over?

I think that for *Tricky*, that was something that allowed us to bring out the personality

of the characters. *SSX 3* didn't have celebrity voices, but it still had a lot of personality in the voiceovers for the characters, and that's something we're still going to have for the characters in the current version of *SSX*. They're still going to have their own voices, their personalities are still going to really shine through.

I've seen people go down a run five different times and play it differently each time

Is there anything new in the way of character development, such as cut-scenes or any kind of story progression?

There is a story to the game, and you are going to see how these characters interact with each other as they race each other on all of these different tracks around the world.

One of the other things we really liked in *SSX 3* was the customisation of the characters. Kaori has always been popular because she's maybe the biggest caricature of them all. She had the coolest backpacks! She just had a lot of options to bring out the style you wanted her to have. Is there going to be anything like that in this game?

There's going to be some of that in this game. We are going to be able to customise the character. It's going to be based more

around what the experience is on the hill, as opposed to pure style. But there will be some of that, for sure.

Of the content you can talk about, what's your crowning achievement? Your favourite track or your favourite character so far?

I think so far, it's really hard to say. The thing I'm most proud of is just the level of realism we have in the environments, and the sheer scope of it all. That's the thing that I really like. We've got like nine different regions, 27 different peaks, and over 100 different runs across all those peaks. So the sheer volume of tracks that we've got is something that I'm super happy about.

Is there anything else that you want people to keep in mind when they check it out?

I think it's to just explore as much as possible. They're going to find lines, they're going to find ways to get down the hill. The coolest thing is really, in past *SSX*s, we tried to craft very specific lines down the hill. Now what it's more about is finding your own way down, letting you find the best jump or the best rail or whatever. I've seen people go down a run five different times and play it differently each time. That type of thing is really cool, I think there's a lot of replayability to the game that way. ❌



RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2012

Unbounded will feature plenty of destruction and car crashes.

Ridge Racer Unbounded

We wanted to know more, so we spoke to Joonas Laakso of Bugbear



What elements of your earlier games, such as the destructibility of *FlatOut*, will you be incorporating into *Ridge Racer Unbounded*?

It's still unmistakably a Bugbear game. Elements you might recognise from our previous games are lots of stuff you're driving through, destroying it, lots of stuff airborne, destructible cars, lots of cars crashing. The feel of the driving is quite different from our previous titles, but it's still built on the same basics – that is, based on physics.

What is the studio aiming for in terms of balance between destructibility and racing? Is one favoured over the other?

We wanted both to feel core, so we created this gameplay cycle: racing feeds destruction, which benefits racing. So in order to do well, you *have* to play rough, but you can't win *just* by being a reckless driver. You need to know how to handle your car, too. We tried all-destruction and all-racing, too, but it doesn't work out. It's still a challenge to communicate it clearly to the player, so in most game modes we're clearly favouring one over the other.

Have you looked at what works and what doesn't work in other destructive racing games, such as *Split/Second: Velocity* and the *MotorStorm* series?

Absolutely. Both of those games have gone for much the same elements as we have, except we're bringing the whole playful creation side into it. *MotorStorm* has great settings. Both games have great scenarios, lots of cool scenes and overall destruction we need to one-up. *Burnout* has nailed the arcade racing with destruction angle, and we're obviously fans. We've looked at their gameplay feedback, among other things. But mostly we've looked at our own games and figured what we need to change and improve on to make this a different experience.

What *Ridge Racer* elements would you say are crucial to ensuring this still 'feels' like a *Ridge Racer* game?

It comes down to an accessible arcade experience. The *Ridge Racer* experience we're compared to is very pure. We're doing more things at a time, but delivering that same sort of immediately rewarding experience is key. If you compare this to our previous games, you'll see it's much easier to get into. It doesn't punish you.

Aside from that, there's overall flow. It's been a challenge as your driving is likely to be punctuated by cars crashing, intentionally or not, but we're striving to maintain a good, smooth flow through the game.

At the same time, *Ridge Racer* has changed quite a bit over the years. It's not like we're the first to break the formula. Some of the fans are still upset about the nitrous system introduced in the later titles! If you play *Type 4*, who many regard as the series' finest, that feels more like a *Gran Turismo* or rally title to me, than a direct relative of the latest titles.

How hard has it been to get the tone right? And how would you describe the tone of *Ridge Racer Unbounded*?

It's a challenge. It was very gratifying to be asked to go off in another direction, and doing the *anti*-version of a known brand is relatively straightforward as you have a lot of stuff to riff off. But it's hard to make it understandable to the consumers and the media. That's why we're being as transparent as possible – to make sure everybody knows what they're getting into, and that why this game is cool is a bit different from existing *Ridge Racer* titles.

Finally, will you keep up the tradition of a classic Namco arcade game on the loading screen?

I honestly don't know yet! We'd love to do it, but there's still a bunch of bigger features to finalise.

Ridge Racer Unbounded is being developed by Bugbear Entertainment. Check out www.bugbear.fi for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Bugbear looks to be taking this opportunity with both hands.
- Smashing stuff up is always fun.

- It could prove to be a very interesting take on the *Ridge Racer* series.
- It's an excuse to shout RIIIIIDGE RACERRRR!

READ ME

If you didn't gather from the text above, Bugbear Entertainment is also the developer of racing games such as *FlatOut* and *Sega Rally Revo*.



Q&A

● Bugbear has taken inspiration from previous *Ridge Racer* games as well as other destructive racers, such as the *MotorStorm* series.



● Bugbear expects *Unbounded* to be far more accessible than previous *Ridge Racer* games.



ONLINE PASSES

What does Laakso think of them?
"THEY'RE NOT TRYING to be obnoxious people, there's a very real business reason to do it. Of course as a consumer, it's not ideal to me. But personally I don't mind as long as I'm aware of it and can make a decision. Of course it nudges me towards buying new instead of used and that's the point, but it's still your own call."



RELEASE DATE: TBC 2012

Final Fantasy X HD

Spira, Sin, Tidus, Yuna and Glorious HD. YEAH



The tenth main entry in the *Final Fantasy* series still gets a bit of a rough ride from fans and critics the world over. Why? We're not entirely sure. It was a lovingly crafted, suitably grand entry to the series, and a game that helped show the world just what the PS2 could do.

So for the tenth anniversary we're more than happy to welcome *Final Fantasy X*, tarted up to Glorious HD and released on both PS3 and PSVita. Though technically that means it won't be in 'proper' HD, as Vita doesn't quite do that. It's done up, though, stop whining.

We don't know much beyond the fact the remake is in development and that – at some point – it will come out. How much it will cost, we're not sure – there is a bit of a worry there as Squenix has a bit of a reputation for charging As Much As

It was a lovingly crafted, suitably grand entry to the series

Possible for re-releases. Still, playing *Final Fantasy X* again, ten years later and looking nicer than it did is sure to be – at the very least – an interesting prospect.

Final Fantasy X HD is being developed by Square Enix. Check out www.square-enix.com/eu/en/ for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ *FFX* is unfairly maligned by some – it's a good game.
- ❑ It has blue skies in it, and not much brown.
- ❑ Depending on how much polish it gets, it could be a very sexy update.
- ❑ This could set a precedent for more *FF* titles being remade in HD.

READ ME

Final Fantasy X, originally released in 2002 in Europe, was awarded a massive 94% in **Play 90**. Basically meaning: we thought it was well good, like.



BUT... WAIT...

We want this one in
Glorious HD as well

THERE WAS SOME consternation on *FFX HD*'s announcement – a lot of it centring on the fact it's not *FFVII HD*. Think about it: tarding up a PS2 game, updating assets and bundling it out there is a hell of a lot easier than making a game from 1997 look anything like HD. It's not the most popular decision, but it's definitely a much easier decision. We can still dream of *Final Fantasy VII HD* though...



PREVIEW



1 WHAT'S IN A NAME? EVERYTHING

Beltway. Bertha. Vector. Spectre. No, not the names of the groups in next year's *X Factor*, but the names given to the personality-free Special Forces buddies you play as in *Operation Raccoon City*. One of them can turn invisible, one's a medic, another's fat, the last one does something inconsequential. For all of Capcom's talk about teamwork, all footage so far makes the game look like it's got as much strategy in it as *Time Crisis 2*.

Now it's not always necessary for teamwork-focused games to give each character 'classes': the classic *Left 4 Dead* features no such character differentiation and is still solely reliant on teamwork. Here, despite the characters' different abilities, they never seem to work together.

CANON FODDER

It doesn't feel like *Resident Evil*

In *Operation Raccoon City* you can apparently kill *Resident Evil*'s Leon Kennedy. Now we're totally fine with Slant Six dicking about with the *Resident Evil* canon: after all, Capcom has been doing the same thing for years now. It's just that *Operation Raccoon City* doesn't really 'feel' like a *Resident Evil* game. It feels like what it is: a *SOCOM* game with zombies in it. In a way it's reminiscent of certain fan-modded PC games: 'wouldn't it be cool if there was a zombie mode in *SOCOM*?' 'LOL YOU'RE RIGHT DUDE LET'S MAKE THAT!'

Not surprising, but disappointing. The characters glide over the tarmac like they're hovering, firing off more bullets than in both World Wars combined. It makes us feel like the *Resident Evil* name has just been bolted on in the hope of increasing sales.

2



3 BLEEDING LOVE

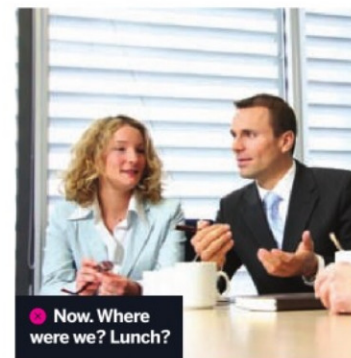
Wait, this actually looks quite promising

One element of *Operation Raccoon City* that we're looking forward to messing around with is the playable zombie mode and bleed-out mechanism. Take too much damage and your character will begin to bleed out, attracting the zombie horde. We can't comment on the tactical advantages this actually gives players, but we're hopeful that we can shoot one of our team-mates in a tight spot and get them lynched instead.

Take enough damage and you may become infected, turning you into a zombie and giving you the chance to chase your former friends. A throwback to the woefully under-appreciated *Resident Evil Outbreak* games, we hope this turns out to be more than just a gimmick.



THE BLAME GAME Here's definitely (not) how Operation Raccoon City came to be



HEAD TO HEAD

Zombies aren't your only adversary

4

Zombies and other biological weapons may have turned Raccoon into an all out warzone, but Umbrella's experiments aren't the only things standing in your way: also on-site are US Special Forces attempting to rescue any survivors of the zombie outbreak. As such we're hoping that Capcom has the good sense to include a 'player vs player' versus mode: after all, a three-way battle between two squads of intelligent humans with a biohazard menace in the middle actually sounds like it could be fun.



RELEASE DATE: EARLY 2012

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City

What is this we don't even...

PS3

We're not going to lie to you: *Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City* looks absolutely wack.

We don't know whose idea it was to ask *SOCOM: Confrontation* developer Slant Six Games (also (not) known informally on **Play** as 'the guys that ruined *SOCOM*') to make '*SOCOM*', but with zombies in it' but whoever it was should have no more ideas, ever. Simply put, this doesn't look very good. Instead of leaving it at that, here are five reasons why.

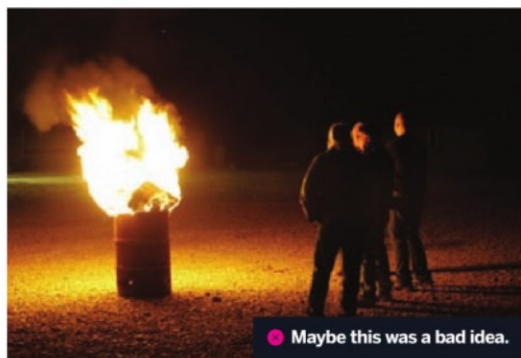
In case we haven't made it perfectly clear already **Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City** is being developed by Slant Six Games. Check out slantsixgames.com for details.

5 C'MON CAPCOM

Seriously: what is it thinking?

Hands up if you've played the *Resident Evil* remake on the GameCube. Oh, right. Well if you haven't pop down to the shops and pick it up: you'll probably be able to get that and the actual console itself for around about the same price that *Operation Raccoon City* is going to retail for.

Ahem. The point is that it used to feel like Capcom really cared about *Resident Evil*, remaking the original with love and affection. So much so that it still looks and plays great now. Fast-forward to 2011 and we've got outsourced developers roped in to create bizarre series mash-ups. Has the whole world gone crazy?



Maybe this was a bad idea.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

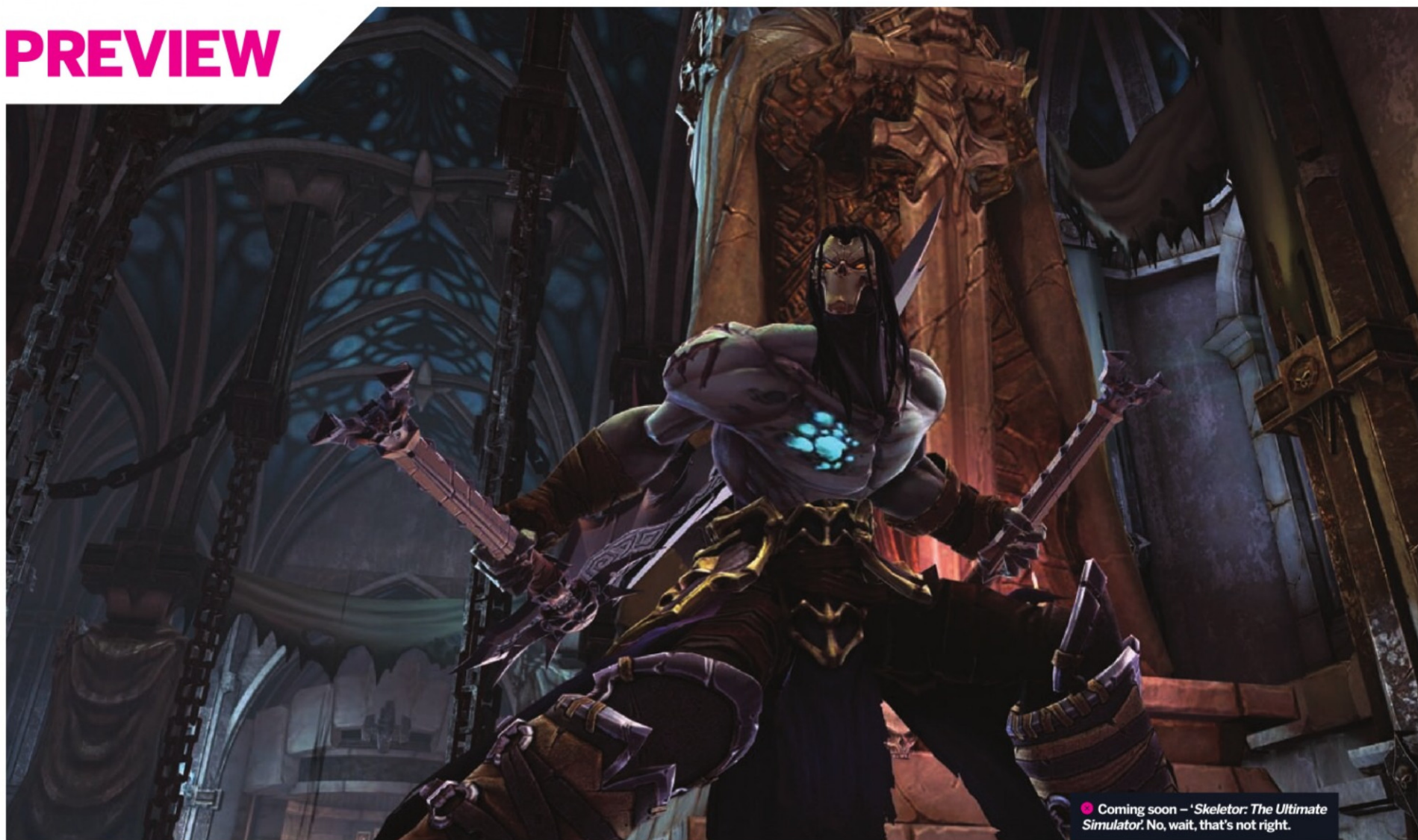
- It has shooting in it
- It also has zombies in it!
- And a character called Bertha
- Err...

READ ME

Slant Six, developer of *Operation Raccoon City*, has only three other games to its name. Bet you can't guess which franchise they belong to.



PREVIEW



Coming soon – 'Skeletor: The Ultimate Simulator'. No, wait, that's not right.

The original took a while to get going but Vigil wants players to get straight into the action in *Darksiders II*.



CLOSING TIME

THQ closes a fair few studios. Is Vigil worried?

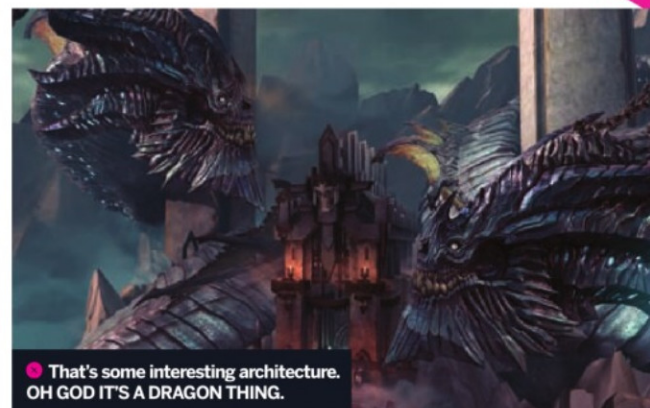
IS STEFANELLI WORRIED

that *Darksiders II* selling millions might still be deemed 'too niche' by THQ? No: "If those 2 million people that buy *Darksiders II* have a great time and love the game, everyone else can deem it whatever they like and we'll still be happy. We can't worry about that kind of stuff anyway; we're too busy making a badass game."

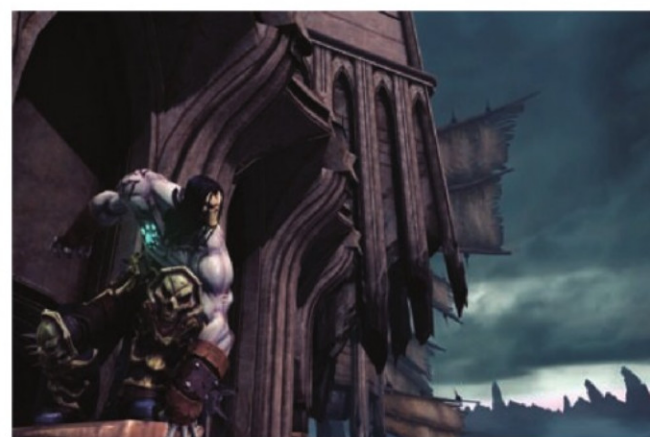


RELEASE DATE: TBC 2012

• Darksiders II or 'Street Cleaning Simulator'? Tough choice.



• That's some interesting architecture. OH GOD IT'S A DRAGON THING.



Darksiders II

We wanted to know more, so we asked Ryan Stefanelli, producer at Vigil Games

PS3

Will you be taking less risks with *Darksiders II* – 'it ain't broke' and all that?

Darksiders was an ambitious project – a new IP, using new technology, built by a new team in a genre few people dare to participate in. We're proud of what we built, but consider some of our decisions to be conservative in light of our other challenges. With *Darksiders II*, we have a seasoned team working with well-rounded tools, so we have more room to experiment with our gameplay ideas and generally have fun making the game. We could've made *Darksiders 1.5*, followed the exact same template and churned out a re-skinned version of the first game, but Vigil would never do that.

Did the success of the first game take you by surprise?

Not at all. We believed in the game we were making. Every development process has ups and downs, moments where you second guess yourself, but we always saw the light at the end of the tunnel. It was a game made for people who love games, by people who love games. We were confident that passion would show. The reviews were

positive, but we were most excited by the passionate response from gamers. The game is still being talked about almost two years later, and that lasting memory is what we really wanted to leave with people.

Some said the original took too long to get going. Is this something you've looked to address?

Definitely... We did feel like it took too long to reach the core of what makes *Darksiders* special, which is our gameplay variety. If *Darksiders* had begun with a dungeon, rather than combat-focused sequences, I think people would've 'gotten' it sooner. That probably would've curbed some of the comparisons to other action-focused games. *Darksiders* is about the alchemy of elements – action, puzzle solving, traversal, and now way more – and that's the impression we want to convey sooner in the game rather than

later. So we've made sure that shows at the start of *Darksiders II*.

Has THQ been pushing you into the world of transmedia?

More like we've been pushing them. When you create a game like *Darksiders*, with such cool characters and back stories, a lot of what you put to paper doesn't end up getting used. We want there to be *Darksiders* novels, comics, movies, television series, webisodes, T-shirts, action figures, lithographs, and more so we can see all our unused ideas come to life. It's my personal belief that the happiness of the world's population is directly proportional to the amount of *Darksiders* material in existence.

A gamer walks into a shop, money in hand ready to buy a new game.

***Darksiders II* is out. They know nothing about it. You happen to be**

there, looking for a new copy of 'Street Cleaning Simulator' or something, and you notice him staring at *Darksiders II*. What would you say to convince that confused gamer to buy your game?

I'd say, 'Look I know 'Street Cleaning Simulator' is currently sitting at 99 on Metacritic, but *Darksiders II* lets you play as a Horseman of the Apocalypse facing off against the forces of Heaven and Hell. Don't get me wrong, I love clean streets – but you know what I love even more? Charging my ghostly steed into a horde of enemies, then leaping off with dual scythes in hand to finish off my foes. Besides, I'm buying the last copy of 'Street Cleaning Simulator' so you can't have it. But seriously, *Darksiders II* is amazing and there's no other game like it. It's an experience you'll remember.'

Darksiders II is currently being developed by Vigil Games. Check out www.vigilgames.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Fundamentally it's more of the same. 'The same' is good.
- There's a confidence about Vigil that's hard to argue with.

- A nice, chunky, meaty adventure supposedly coming out in the summer.
- By that we mean it should help avoid the drought. YEAH.

READ ME

Darksiders crammed in so many 'influences' in its 20-plus hours we're struggling to think of where else the sequel can 'borrow' ideas from.



RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY

FIFA Football

Proof that the little leagues can have fun, too



Do you have hands like broken crab claws? Go on. Have a look. The answer, if you missed the 'are your hands like broken crab claws' bit in biology because you were busy reading **Play**, is that they aren't. They are normal hands with normal fingers and a normal thumb in the normal place. Therefore, you might have a problem playing *FIFA 12* on Vita.

First, the good news. This will be the best football game on handheld by a long, long distance. That's only fair as it will be the only football game on PlayStation Vita and if you squint really hard but not so hard that your eyes start bleeding, it could easily be mistaken for the PlayStation3 version. It's put together using the same art assets and besides the loss of some detail, it retains the same animations, focus on realism and Wayne Rooney's shouty face that made its original outing sparkle.

You can play *FIFA* on Vita the standard way, using the buttons and what not. Given the PSVita build

itself – light, firm, with buttons that are so silky smooth to touch you feel almost wrong for doing so – you won't get hand cramp as easily as happened on PSP. More important are the touch screen controls. You can tap the front screen to pass the ball exactly where you want it, holding down for a lofted pass. The rear screen acts as a virtual goal of sorts, with you tapping exactly where you want to place your shot.

This is where the forced broken crab claw analogy came in. The system works as you get used to it and the moment you combine the two is a real air-punching moment, followed by the horror when you realise you've just dropped your Vita. But there's no easy way to hold your Vita to touch front screen and back on demand. That will be the main challenge obstacle for both *FIFA 12*'s success and to those wanting to enjoy it.

FIFA 12 on PlayStation Vita is being developed by the clever guys and girls at EA, who can be found at www.ea.com. Obviously.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Tap the front screen to make a pass.
- Tap the buttons to do whatever the buttons do.
- Tap the rear screen to take a shot!
- Tap the PSVita case to make a nice sound.

READ ME

Essentially *FIFA* on Vita, it's almost a perfect replica of its big PS3 brother with added touch screen controls to make it feel new, shiny and fun.

Getting to grips with the controls without breaking your Vita could prove tricky.



The Virtual Pro mode has been left out of the Vita iteration.

WHAT'S MISSING?

Shrinkage on display

WHILE THE BASIC game has made it onto Vita with most of its looks intact, there has been some weight loss in transition. Notably, the Virtual Pro hasn't made the cut, but no one in these here parts speaks too highly of that mode anyway. That's it. All the players, moves and leagues will be in, so your dreams of re-enacting Barnet vs Macclesfield on the move are alive.

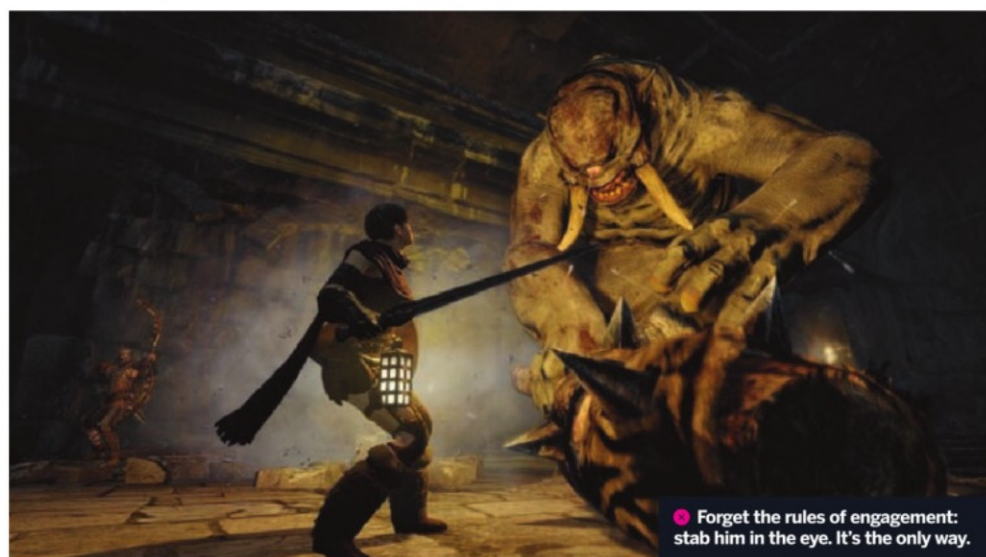


Does this look like the end of *Star Wars* to you? Just us?

SHARING IS CARING

You can't play together, but you, er, can. What?

ALTHOUGH *DRAGON'S DOGMA* is taking a lot of flak for being single-player only players can still party up with each other via the pawn system. Essentially you can recruit your friends' creations into your own party. It doesn't sound like the best solution, but at least it's something. We're already dreaming of making the **Play** team and sending them out to battle.



Forget the rules of engagement: stab him in the eye. It's the only way.

The open-world of *Dragon's Dogma* is visually stunning.



RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2012

Dragon's Dogma

Come fly with me...

PS3

Capcom's newest IP has a lot to prove to many people. With the house that *Mega Man* built seemingly caught in a creative slump, churning out endlessly repetitive *Resi*, *Street Fighter* and *Marvel* sequels, the Japanese giant had to take a risk in creating an original product. The question is now whether it has bitten off more than it can chew, because *Dragon's Dogma* is nothing if not ambitious.

Aiming to bridge the gap between traditional Japanese RPGs and the Western variety that has seen so much success in recent years, *Dragon's Dogma* is a typical Western fantasy RPG with a decidedly Japanese bent: numbers and stats are of course everywhere, but while there's certainly an appreciation for the more cerebral approach to fighting there's also the opportunity to take on foes much like an action game, climbing onto massive creatures to bring them to their knees.

The world itself is also interesting: after the relentless tedium of *Final Fantasy XIII's* linear corridors *Dragon's Dogma* injects a nice amount of open-world exploration into the mix, not unlike that found in Bethesda's wildly popular *Elder Scrolls* games.

One curious decision, however, is that, despite the party-focused nature of the game, it'll be a

staunchly single-player experience. Capcom producers are hilariously haughty about this, even going so far as to start interviews by warning journos not to ask about it, but there is a reason: timing.

Apparently, Capcom believes that to have more than one player takes away from the immediacy of combat, and the player's ability to dictate the flow of the battle. With action being towards the forefront of the game we can see why this decision was made, but we're not convinced that Capcom couldn't have made it work given more time.

On a more positive note, *Dragon's Dogma's* 'pawn' system looks far more interesting. Essentially the name for the party system, it enables players to not only create their character (via a deep customisation toolset, naturally) but to also go online and download their friends' characters for use in their game. Which is a nice addition, if a little maddening because, yes, it's a single-player game. Hmmm.

With Capcom on record stating that this has the largest budget and allotted dev time in the firm's history it seems like the company really believes in the title, but it's just too early to call whether or not this will succeed.

Dragon's Dogma is being developed by Capcom. If you'd like more information check out www.capcom-europe.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Amazingly crazy title.
- Grand scale.
- Massive budget.
- Pawn system.

READ ME

Attempting to blur the line between Eastern and Western design is a nice idea, but can it actually work?

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: APRIL

This is going to end badly for someone. Our money's on the guy on the right.

Prototype 2

Open-world thuggery in a New York setting? How original!

PS3

Did anyone actually love the original *Prototype*?

Really love it, like you might love *Uncharted*, *Metal Gear*, or, erm, *Leisure Suit Larry*? No, probably not. *Prototype*'s open-world destruction, wanton violence and unpolished nature made it one of those titles that was everyone's 12th favourite game of the year: flawed but fun.

You know it, we know it, and thankfully developer Radical Entertainment knows it, promising to fix all the problems from the last game this time around. Which is a fairly obvious thing to say – we can't remember the last time a developer went 'nah, it'll just be the same with shinier graphics' – but Radical does appear to have taken some steps to iron out the problems.

First up is a change of character. Original protagonist Alex Mercer is out on his emo-kid, hoody-clad ear. Instead we've now got James Heller, a Marine sergeant whose family

has been killed by the Blackwatch, a private security deathsquad aiming to wipe out the infection that has turned the residents of NYC into slaving zombie goons. Understandably he's a little miffed about the whole thing, and decides to go on a killing spree. Fortunately for him he's also got Mercer's shapeshifting ability, enabling him to spawn gigantic claw arms, tendrils and a whole lot more to cause destruction with.

Radical made the change because Mercer's story was always mired in murky conspiracy plotting. The studio hopes that with Heller's more straightforward character motivations the presentation of the narrative is clearer and more easily defined, although we're not sure that anyone's going to start analysing the finer points of the plot when the limbs start flailing and blood starts spraying against newly christened New York Zero's walls.

Unlike the first game's purely Manhattan setting, *Prototype 2*'s interpretation of New York is now divided into three distinct zones, each colour coded to represent the threat level of the virus that's tearing the country apart. Red Zone is of course the most dangerous, dripping with mutated tendrils and generally looking like most British town centres on a Saturday night. Yellow is slightly safer, comprising the evacuation zone, and green is almost totally clear, enabling the rich and famous to generally continue gallivanting around.

The Red Zone is probably the place to be to test out Heller's new combat abilities. A new tactical dodge move has been implemented to enable gamers to leapfrog onrushing enemies if you get the timing right, and missiles can be batted back to the aggressor if spotted early enough. Radical is aiming to remove repetition from

the combat, even going so far as making enemies 'learn' your favourite move and develop a strategy to counteract it.

Mission selection too has changed, with Radical hoping to create an experience that always feels like it's moving forward, even when you're doing side-quests. Now, missions can be accessed from Blackwatch command trucks that are dotted around as well as individuals in the world (whose details can be obtained from said trucks). These individuals' missions might then affect the overall arc. The whole system is designed to feed into an experience that players don't just segregate into 'mission' and 'side-mission'.

If the original game was a bitty, frustrating collection of individual mechanics that never quite came together, then this sequel is what Radical Entertainment hopes will be a game that's more than the sum of its parts, not less. We'll have to wait and see if it can do that but with a focus on integration and streamlining the experience maybe *Prototype* can live up to its promise.

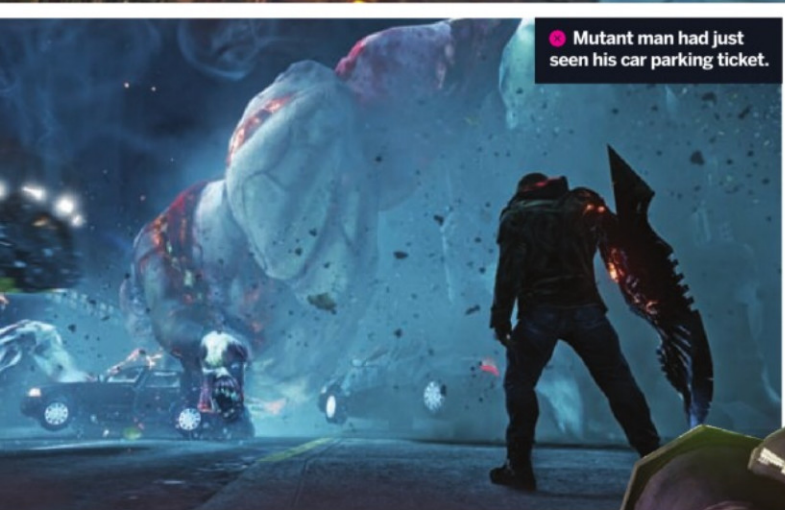
Prototype 2 is being developed by Radical Entertainment. Check out www.prototypegame.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ Killing people...
- ❑ Killing tanks...
- ❑ Uppercutting helicopters.
- ❑ Uppercutting helicopters. Seriously.

READ ME

The first *Prototype* game found itself up against *inFamous*. The similarities between the games were obvious, but with that series now out of the way *Prototype 2* will have more of an impact than last time.



● Mutant man had just seen his car parking ticket.



● Rocket launchers, eh? Don't leave home without one we say.



TWO MUTATIONS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

Attempting to break the first game's monotony

PROTOTYPE'S COMBAT WAS like the rest of the game: it had its good points, but wasn't ever going to set the world on fire. Radical Entertainment has taken the criticism on board and made some changes it thinks are key: Heller can now hot swap between two mutations, for example. This should greatly increase the amount of combos available while also giving the player free rein to create their own individual combat strategies.



1

MILLIONS OF MINIONS

Jackie's minions – the Darklings – have been scaled back to just one of the little blighters. However, whereas last time around it was a case of using them only at certain points for specific tasks, this time the one tiny bugger is a constant presence. He can be used in combat – thrown in a stun attack – and generally makes a nuisance of himself, biting enemies and getting in the way. We also played a section where Jackie took direct control of the nameless Darkling; sneaking about, tearing out throats and opening doors for its moody master. It certainly makes the Darkling a more memorable character than before.

RELEASE DATE: 10 FEBRUARY

The Darkness II

Strike a light, it's a return to The Darkness

PS3

The emotionally scarred possessor of the rather nefarious power known as The Darkness, Jackie Estacado, returns to bewilder us all with just how bad his life can get. Well, 'bad' when you forget about the fact he has the power to control giant tentacles and little throat-ripping gremlin minions. This time around Starbreeze is nowhere to be seen with Digital Extremes, handlers of the PS3 port of *BioShock* as well as the multiplayer component of *BioShock 2* (oh, and *Pariah*, which was rubbish), taking the helm. We had a bit of a play with some updated code just to try to gauge how dark it really is. Here's a clue: we had to turn the brightness up on the TV. And that isn't even a joke.



2

GLORIOUSLY GORY

It takes a lot to shock us, wily veterans that we are, especially when it comes to violence. And to be honest, *The Darkness II* didn't really shock us with its liberal spraying of claret across the screen. That's not to say it isn't what would be considered 'dark and bloody', because it is. When using The Darkness to attack enemies,

the snake-tentacle bastards can twist, crush and tear enemies in ways that look uncomfortable, putting it mildly. The 'wishbone' in particular did actually manage to make us wince – use your imaginations. It's good to see that the tone of the game hasn't been softened, even if the visuals do look more cartoony.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

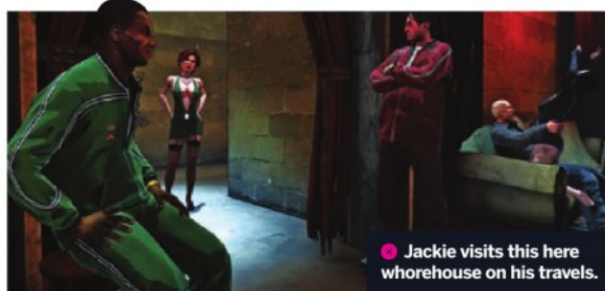
- It's dark. Really though – it's dark.
- An atmospheric and moody fantasy shooter is actually a novelty these days.
- We played it, and it's not that bad at all.
- Mike Patton is ace. We have a mag-crush on him.

READ ME

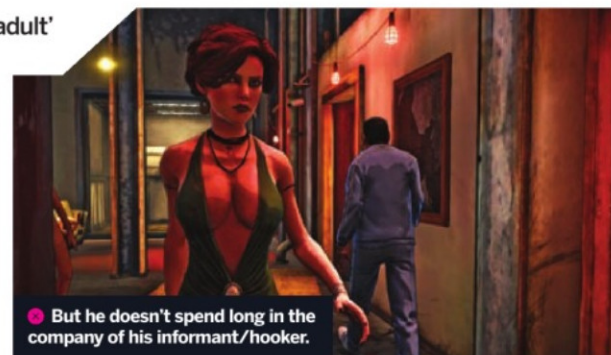
A movie based on *The Darkness*' comics is also in the works, apparently, although nothing has been heard about it in years.

MATURITY, ETC

Because, as we all know, 'adult' means brothels.



Jackie visits this here whorehouse on his travels.



But he doesn't spend long in the company of his informant/hooker.

3

STORYLINE STORYTIME

We know some things! But we're not allowed to talk about them, annoyingly. So instead let's just mention what we can say: Jackie is still caught up on the death of Jenny, the girlfriend he was forced to watch the murder of. It's the sort of thing you'd probably be a bit miffed about, to be fair. But there are other things to worry about – The Darkness wants out, intimidated as it is by Jackie's ability to control it. An ancient cult wants The Darkness for its own nefarious deeds. And there's a mob war going on, with Jackie at the head of it. A normal day then, really.



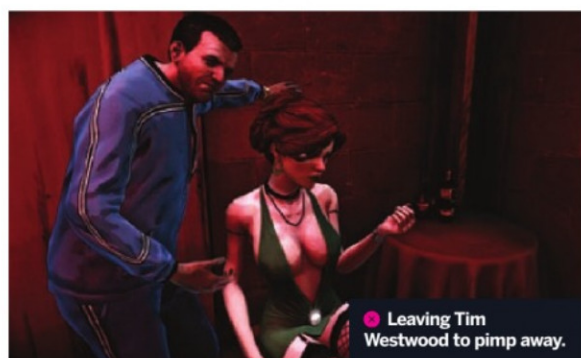
4

LOOK AT ME

One of the most apparent changes you've probably seen with *The Darkness II* is the visual style. Gone is the Starbreeze style of before (sombre colours, quite realistic), replaced with a cel-shaded, more comic book look. There may have been some worries that it detracted somewhat from the general ambience and serious tone of *The Darkness*, but we found it didn't impact much, if at all, on how the whole thing feels. Also – strangely – it actually helps *The Darkness II* stand out against its contemporaries, avoiding the hyper-realism favoured by most other FPS titles and managing to look somewhat distinctive in a crowded market. Always a bonus when that happens.

MR BUNGLE

Atmosphere was a huge part of the original game and our time with the sequel has shown us that it's still there in spades. Dark, foreboding spades. Backing up the general feel of unease is another standout vocal performance by Mike Patton as The Darkness – once again absolutely brilliant, just as he was last time around. While we're lost in a general world of Mafioso accents, crack-addled prostitute slang and a moody bummer of a lead character, we can always rely on Patton to snap us straight to attention with his downright disturbing take on the malignant force. Hopefully the rest of the game can stand up alongside this element.



5



PREVIEW



FINAL FANTASY XIV

PUBLISHER: Square Enix **DEVELOPER:** Square Enix **ETA:** January 2013

PS3 If you decided one Sunday to have a barbeque in your back garden and somehow ended up cooking one of the guests, it still wouldn't be as disastrous an event as *Final Fantasy XIV*'s launch was.

Crippled with input lag, an awful interface and glitches galore, Square Enix made its MMORPG free to play on PC, spent a year smashing its virtual world into shape with virtual hammers while quietly hiding the PlayStation 3 version out of view.

Now it's in a presentable state, Square Enix is ready to send its troubled child out the front door. Well, almost. It'll integrate the 'current' PC version along with the PS3 version into an 'all-new' *Final Fantasy XIV*, late next year. The PlayStation 3 version itself? Due January 2013 earliest. If you start saving now...



ALL ZOMBIES MUST DIE!

PUBLISHER: doublesix **DEVELOPER:** doublesix **ETA:** December 2011

PS3 This is the fifth attempt at starting our preview for *All Zombies Must Die!*. "It's only 110 words, do your job!" you cry, shaking your first in limp anger. That's true, we reply, head drooping slightly in shame. The problem is this – our excitement at this zombie blaster is dampened by the lack of online co-op, so we're not sure which foot to lead with for this preview.

That's right – no online co-op. In a zombie game. *All Zombies Must Die!* has weapon crafting, brilliantly judged difficulty, some really smart objectives that rarely repeat themselves, a chunky feel to the gentle art of smacking zombies and a healthy dose of character and fun, then that co-op bombshell is dropped on us. Can it survive its lack of online? We sincerely hope so but only time will tell.

THE BEST OF THE REST...



STRIKE SUIT ZERO

PUBLISHER: doublesix **DEVELOPER:** doublesix **ETA:** Q1 2012

PS3 Space shooters haven't taken off in the brave modern age of gaming. Sitting in black nothingness, slowly spinning towards a red indicator to fire at a tiny dot millions of miles away? About as likely to stir your gaming crotch as the return of 3DO.

Developer doublesix has addressed this problem by making it about close-up combat. With the Earth doomed to die in a few hours, you play as a mech stripping apart large space cruisers with precise gunfire by aiming at the engine, weapons and so on. It's fast-paced and intriguing, which places it above every other space shooter we've seen this gen.



ANARCHY REIGNS

PUBLISHER: Sega **DEVELOPER:** Platinum Games **ETA:** TBC 2012

PS3 It doesn't look like we'll be getting Platinum Games' brilliant *MadWorld* ported to PlayStation 3 any time in the near future, unfortunately, so we'll have to make do with the closest approximation: *Anarchy Reigns*.

In recent months we've seen a bit more from the online brawler and it keeps on kicking up images of Power Stone in our mindboxes – this ain't a bad thing. We are concerned with the level of appeal the game could have and there's always the worry it will be a bit lacking in depth – but we're more than ready to be proven wrong.



SNIPER ELITE 2

PUBLISHER: 505 Games **DEVELOPER:** Rebellion Developments **ETA:** TBC 2012

PS3 *Sniper Elite* comes from a time before Rebellion had created the worst PlayStation 3 game ever made (according to *Play*'s ratings), *Rogue Warrior*. It's also not from Rebellion Derby, as that studio no longer exists. This leads us to believe that *Sniper Elite 2* might not be all that bad and, in fact, might be as enjoyable as the rather overlooked original was.

We're treading on eggshells with this one, truth be told, and it could go either way – but Rebellion is deserving of a game we can all get on board with. It's been too long.



STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN

PS3

PUBLISHER: Capcom **DEVELOPER:** Capcom **ETA:** 9 March 2012

Once upon a time, *Street Fighter X Tekken* made sense, in the weird way that only a game featuring a man dressed as a jaguar fighting a yoga practitioner could make sense.

At some point, Capcom decided this wasn't enough. Say 'hi' to Pandora mode, where those at 25% health can sacrifice their partner to power up their original character (Shin Dhalsim!). Health slowly drains until they lose, giving them a few seconds with infinite Supers to land the knockout blow. More confusing is the Gems system, which lets you power up defence or attack if you land three special moves in a row but only if you have that gem selected and if that's the condition to activate it and... yeah. It's confusing. Can't we just, you know, fight like gentlemen?



KINGDOMS OF AMALUR: RECKONING

PS3

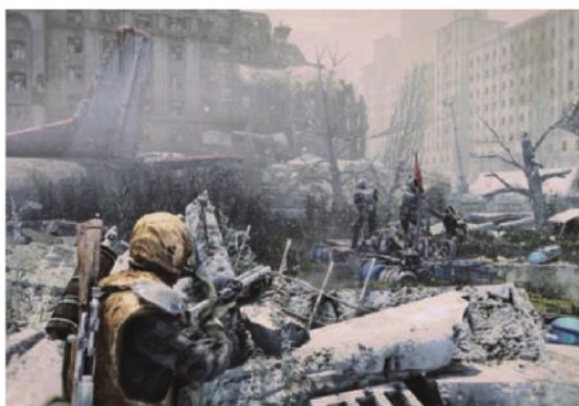
PUBLISHER: 38 Studios/Big Huge Games **DEVELOPER:** EA

ETA: 10 February 2012

This was a game at risk of falling off our radar, being lost to the winds of accidental ignorance. Then we played it. That new goblin-shaped blip on our radar? That's right, it's *Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning*! At the risk of incurring the wrath of millions of Xbox 360 owners armed with fire-heated pitchforks, this is the game Microsoft-exclusive *Fable* always promised to be and never quite managed.

It's part action-adventure, part RPG, part looting. It plays like a hack-'n'-slasher with spells ensuring the action is light and frothy while the levelling up and constant need to improve your armour and weapons massages the Compulsion Glands to keep you playing. Keep an eye on this one – this has sleeper hit potential.

A delicious platter of games in the future!
Except you can't eat them. Unless your teeth
are really sharp and your gums made of steel



METRO: LAST LIGHT

PS3

PUBLISHER: THQ **DEVELOPER:** 4A Games

ETA: TBC 2012

We've decided to ignore the fact that *Metro 2033* didn't come out on PlayStation 3 and not hold it against developer 4A Games. We're not vindictive, especially not when the trailer looks as good as *Metro: Last Light*'s.

We're also not graphics whores, so the rest of the game is going to have to be good for us to sing its praises come release, but the last game was a solid, atmospheric and rather scary shooter.

Not that we would know anything about that, obviously, seeing as we'd clearly never play a game on Xbox 360...



PUSS IN BOOTS

PS3

PUBLISHER: THQ **DEVELOPER:** Blitz Games

ETA: Out now

'Motion-based swashbuckling' sounds like the perfect ingredient for a delicious gaming omelette, and when we read it on a press release we suddenly became thrilled – *thrilled*.

Then we remembered it was a press release for the movie tie-in for *Puss In Boots* and it would mean using PlayStation Move, and we sort of lost interest.

Then again, Blitz Games did make *Sneak King*: the greatest game ever (based on a giant king) given out with burgers, even if it was only in the US and for The Other Console. It'll get a fair hearing come release, but we're not massively enthusiastic about this one.



NI NO KUNI: WRATH OF THE WHITE WITCH

PS3

PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai **DEVELOPER:**

Level 5/Studio Ghibli **ETA:** TBC 2012

Two reasons you should care about this one: first, it looks absolutely spiffy, with artwork from Studio Ghibli, every Japanophile's favourite thing. Second, it's being made by Level 5, a company that has a rich and proven record when it comes to RPGs – it brought us *Dragon Quest VIII*, *Dark Chronicle* and *Rogue Galaxy*, to name but a few.

Oh, and have a rogue third reason to care: it's surprising we're even getting *Ni No Kuni* over here, so it's one we're definitely going to keep an eye on.

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PLAY Reviews 点検

Playing bad games so you don't have to

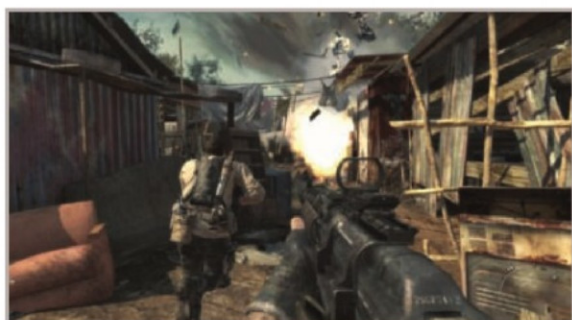
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Have we seen it all before?

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You can find us avoiding work at facebook.com/PlayMagUK, shhhh



YouTube

Lots of trailers and funny stuff I've made at youtube.com/PlayMagUK



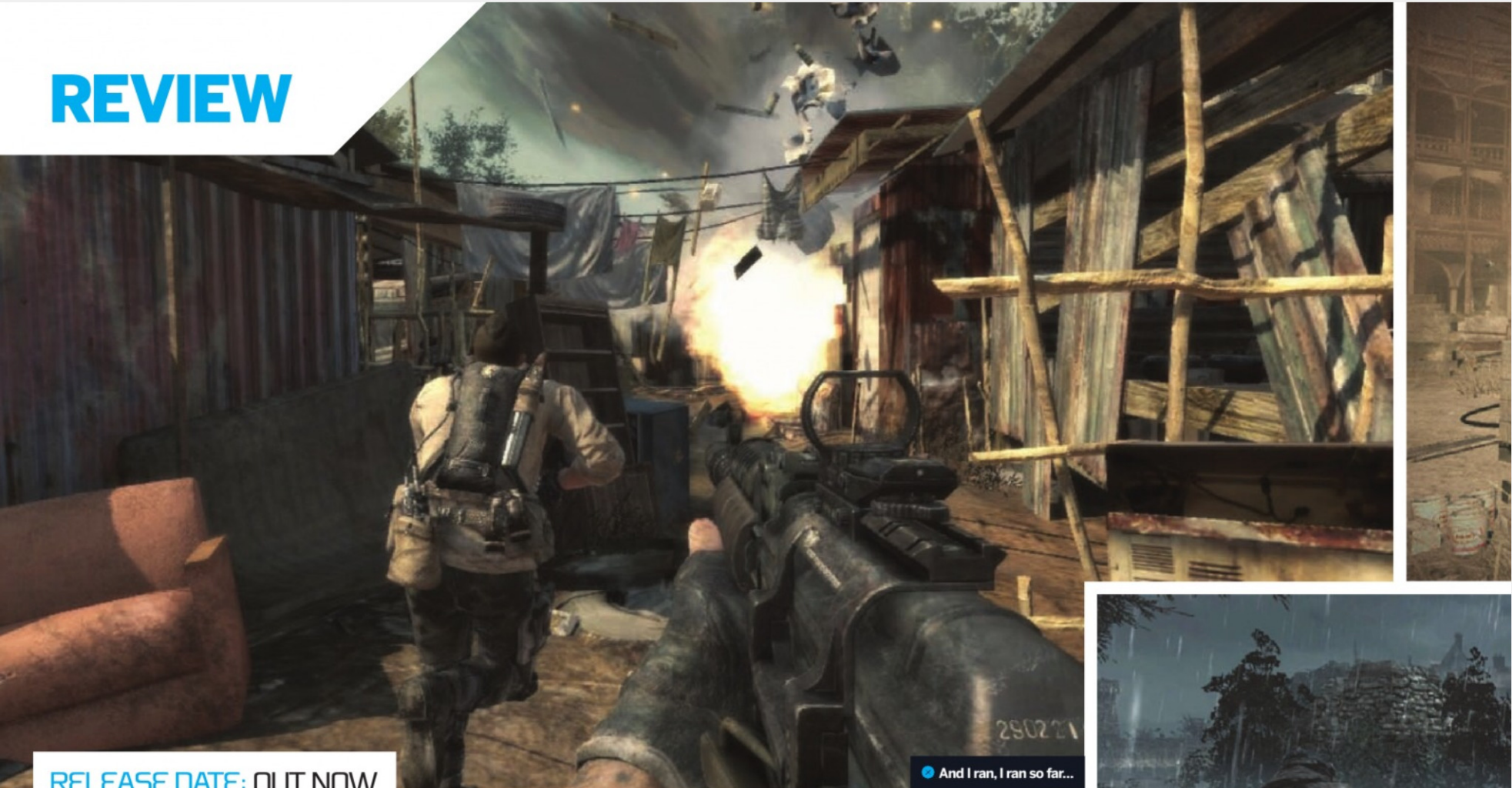
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RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3

Or as it's also known: 'Explosions: The Game'



DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Infinity Ward/
Sledgehammer
Games
Price
£54.99
Players
1-24
Genre
FPS
Age Rating
18
Website
callofduty.com/mw3
Twitter
@fourzerotwo
Facebook
facebook.com/MW3



Is it that time already? Maybe we were distracted by the constant 'bzzz bzzz bzzz' of *Battlefield 3*'s infuriating advertising campaign, but we can't help but feel that the run-up to *Modern Warfare 3* hasn't been quite the assault on the senses it's been in previous years. The game itself, however, most certainly is.

The *COD* franchise catches a lot of flak for having more explosions per minute than Michael Bay arguing with Jeremy Kyle, but a quick playthrough of *Battlefield 3*'s turgid campaign (or *Homefront*, or *Blacksite: Area 51*, or *Duke Nukem Forever*) reveals a real skill to the way the franchise carefully meters out colossal set piece after colossal set piece. Simply put, no other series is more effective at delivering instant, accessible thrills, and *Modern Warfare 3* is not about to buck that trend.

The formula hasn't changed: it's still 'go here, shoot many men, sometimes get in a vehicle, listen to military jargon, repeat to fade'. What has changed is the scale of the campaign experience. It was natural that *MW3* would have to 'go bigger' than before, but it is the manner in which Sledgehammer Games – drafted in when co-developer Infinity Ward

underwent its crisis last year – has gone about the task that impresses. You get the feeling that Sledgehammer, with its pedigree of having been founded by two important figures in the creation of *Dead Space*, brought much to the pacing and storytelling aspects of the game, as well as the action itself.

Moving away from a *Modern Warfare 2*-style ludicrously convoluted plot – you know the one: some nonsense about Russia, a rogue US Army officer, and the general feeling that the writers simply got a bit carried away on Red Bull and started smacking the keyboard – for what boils down to a straight-out manhunt (with added distractions, of course), *Modern Warfare 3*'s narrower plot focus enables the rest of the game to shine.

No other series is more effective at delivering instant, accessible thrills, and *MW3* is not about to buck that trend

With the world now at war following Russian Ultranationalist leader Vladimir Makarov's nefarious schemes (one of which is wearing a bitching scarf and always being behind a door with a pistol, the cad), *MW3* has the opportunity to drop players back into the 'proper' warzones that defined the earlier, pre-*Modern Warfare*

COD games, and that opportunity has been seized with both hands. With Price and Soap on the run, Europe ablaze with the Ultranationalists pushing West and the United States still on its knees following the Russian invasion, missions (especially those featured in Act II) feel like they have a real frontline sense to them: of taking territory from the enemy and clawing the war back yard by yard.

Compare, for example, the opening missions of the previous two games: an assault on a tanker and a fairly low-key battle with Afghan fighters. The *Modern Warfare* games, with their focus on clandestine conflicts and guerrilla insurgencies have generally propelled players along tight corridors of action. Here, they're blown out in awe-inspiring vistas and high technology: a combination of *Call Of Duty*'s past and present, what World War II would have been like if it had recon drones, helicopters and people constantly saying 'Copy'.

The game opens with Delta Force operatives fighting through a destroyed New York: tattered flags hang over a ruined Wall Street, rubble, cars and bombed out buildings litter every avenue and impede every run for cover, and rooftop shoot-outs and helicopter evacs snaking around skyscrapers enable players to see it all from the air. The game sets its stall out in grand



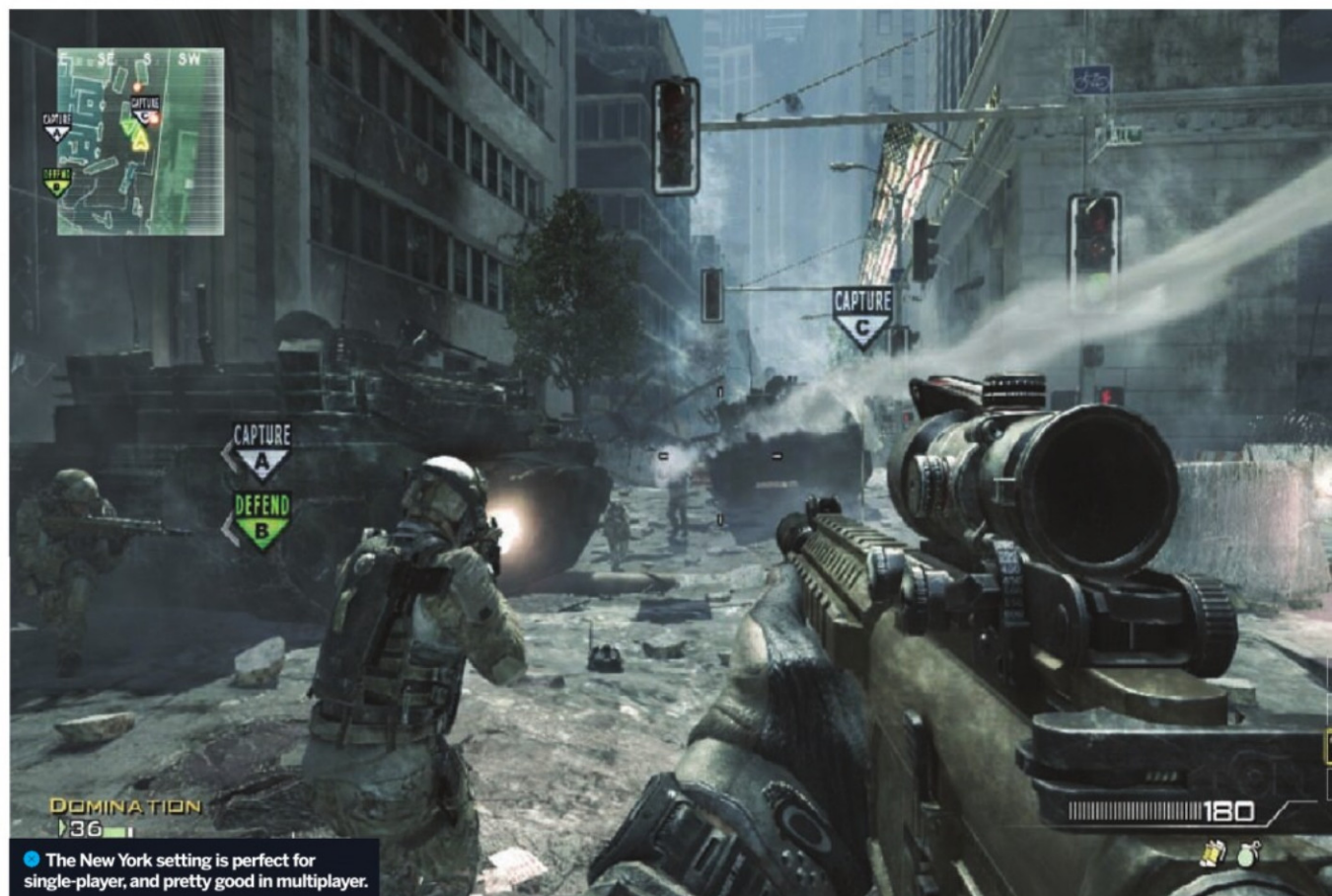


Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3

THE PROFESSIONAL

New gun rank system means you'll love 'your gun' even more

EVERYONE HAS THEIR favourite gun in *COD*. For some it's the M16, for others it's the AK, for a distressing amount of people it's the noob-tube. *MW3*'s new Weapon Proficiency system means that you're going to be seeing a lot more of them. Essentially now your gun levels up as well as your character, giving you access to mini-perks like less kick when firing, less flinch when hit, or longer range. It's a nice passive system that improves play even more, although it might lead to players not daring to try something new for fear that 'it won't be as good'. It might. Embrace it.

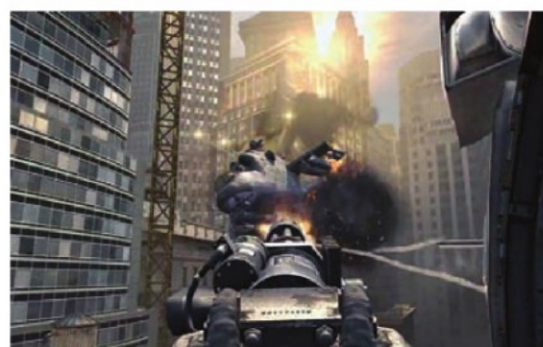
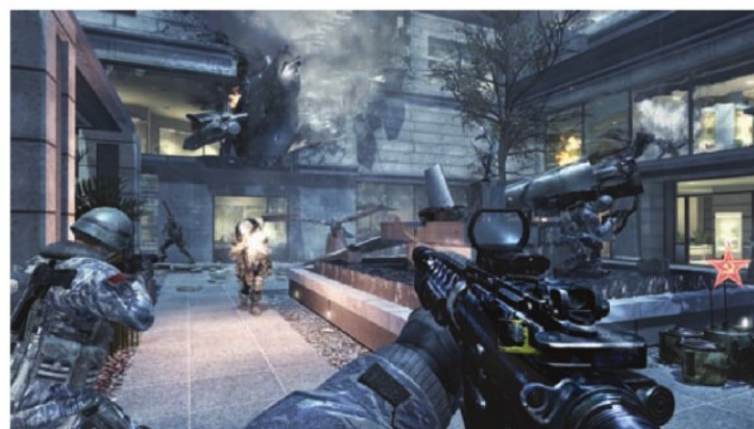


fashion after Delta operatives Sandman and Frost take down a massive nuclear sub in the NYC harbour: resurfacing after using Scuba gear to get the mission done the player is greeted with the sight of the financial district, as wide as it is tall, absolutely destroyed, gigantic USS aircraft carriers scuppered and half overturned into the shallow waters filled with wreckage and bodies.

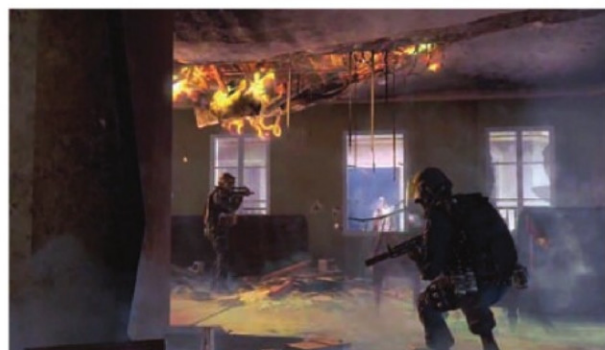
It's a great scene, and much the same can be said of the other missions that involve Sandman and co. As part of 'Big Army' (ie a massive offensive force), you'll find yourself fighting across European frontlines as part of a platoon of soldiers, not just saving the world yourself. *Call Of Duty 4* is still loved because it made you feel like a cog in the war machine; the sequel and *Black Ops* less so as you went from being a soldier to being James Bond. Despite the increased bombast (if that was even possible) here the series has gone back to its roots. From storming a beach in

Hamburg that recalls Normandy to fighting through dirty bomb-addled Parisian streets and catacombs (and the rather grim feeling of stepping over hundreds of civilian bodies as you push the Russians back) it feels like a 'proper' conflict, propelled forward with gusto by *Call Of Duty*'s excellent frame rate and comfortable, instinctive combat systems.

As ever the game sees you playing as multiple characters: as well as Frost you'll play most of the game as Russian loyalist Yuri, who joins up with Price and the now disavowed Task Force 141 to hunt down Makarov. Sadly, most of the missions featuring the series stalwarts feel like token, throwaway stuff rammed in to increase the globetrotting quotient, including the last couple of missions. Following a massively strong run of levels they're simply disappointing, returning to nondescript locales that feel out of step with the conflict in Europe, with the finale in particular feeling fractured and half-baked. >



REVIEW



SPECULATE TO ACCUMULATE

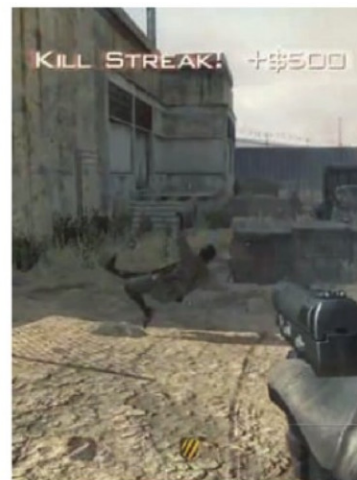
Spec Ops is back, and it's – yes – better than ever. Yay!

PROBABLY THE BEST (read: least annoying) part of *Modern Warfare 2* was the Spec Ops co-op mode. Naturally it's back here, and like the rest of the game it's bigger, better, and more explosion-ier. As before, players attempt to finish self-contained, objective-filled levels to gain Spec Ops 'stars', which let everyone know what a total badass you are. Totally.

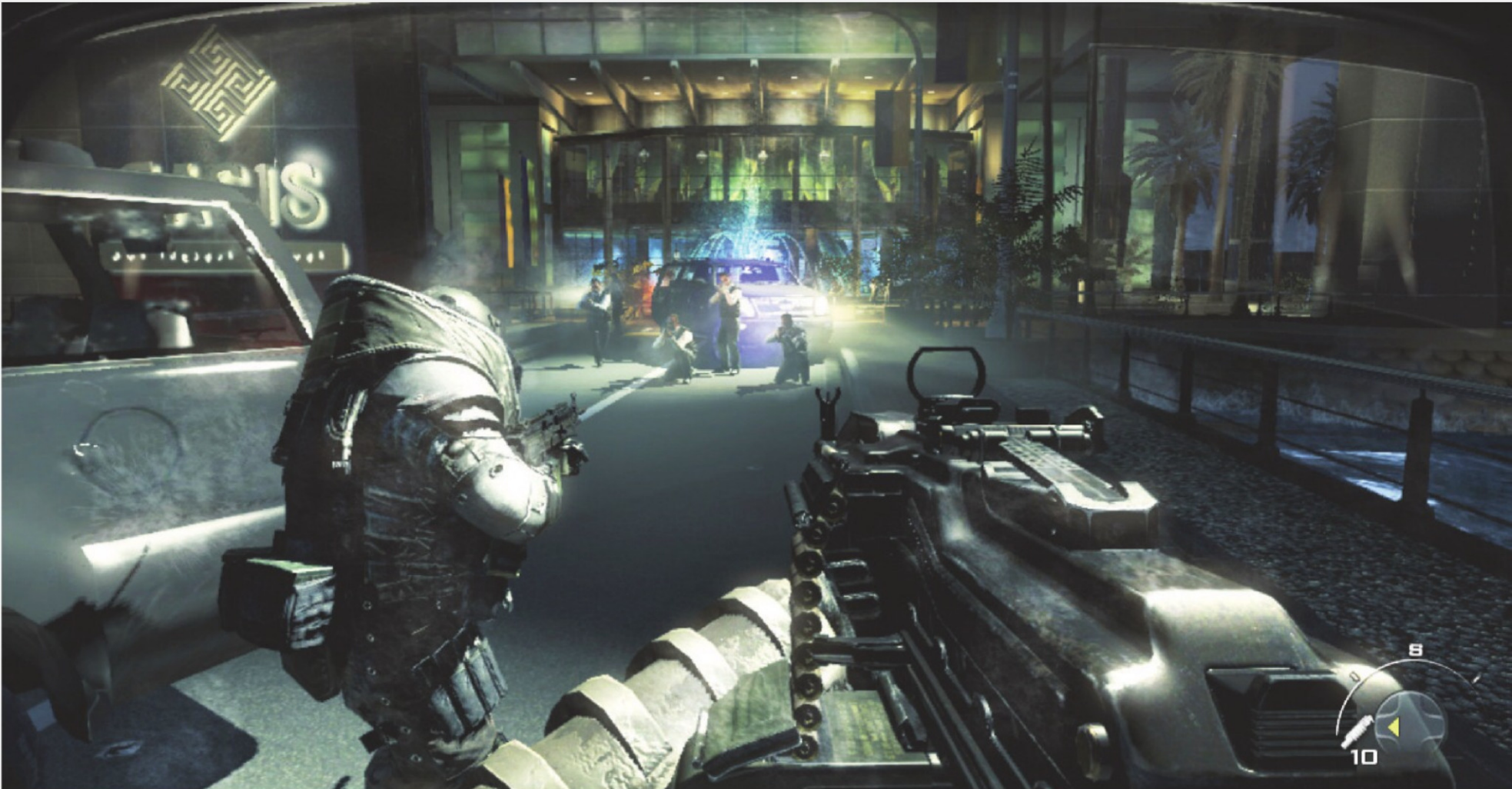
As in the main game there are different difficulty levels, with each corresponding to different star totals. You'll have to play the game on Veteran to get all of the stars, but you'll probably also have to buy a new pad before you do thanks to the teeth-gnashing difficulty.



UNLIKE MW2, THERE are two sections to the Spec Ops experience. The first is called Survival, and we think you can guess what they mean by that. Using the game's 16 multiplayer maps as a starting point, this mode rewards players for seeing off ever-tougher waves of enemies by handing them cold hard cash. This is then used to buy weapons, ammo and airstrikes. You can even buy a team of four Delta Force operators to help you out. Our top pick: Predator missiles, because you can use the overhead camera to call out approaching foes to your partner.



SURVIVAL IS GOOD, but in truth the Mission mode is where it's at. On offer are a host of gameplay chunks that either fit into the main narrative, fleshing out the plot from another perspective, or could very easily have done. You'll play missions as the hijackers on the Russian president's plane, for example, or another Delta Team sent in to clean up whatever Sandman and co left behind. It's a nice addition, as well as being extremely playable: the bite-sized chunks are challenging but highly compelling, and the need to improve your score will keep you coming back. As if that wasn't enough for you, doing well in the missions unlocks weapons and ordinance in Survival.



> Much better, however, are the smaller vignettes that serve as either exposition or back story for the game's main narrative. An explosive London Underground chase as members of the SAS – climaxing in arriving at Big Ben just as an atrocity takes place – is a great diversion, and those of you that loved the missions 'One Shot, One Kill' or 'Shock and Awe' from *COD 4* will lap up the flashback sequences involving these missions. The development team have even been confident enough to include 'disturbing content sequences' that can be skipped, an interesting move considering last year's similar (and rubbish) 'No Russian' mission. Rest assured that it's pretty gruesome, even if the game telegraphs what happens badly.

So, unlike *MW2*, there's plenty to recommend here if you can tear yourself away from the multiplayer: while the series is naturally repeating itself (you'll constantly be going 'oh, this is like the bit from...') and we're approaching (but haven't quite got to yet) the point where familiarity meets contempt, *Modern Warfare 3*'s six hour or so campaign is better than the last two games, and nearly as good as *Call Of Duty 4*'s.

For most, however, the lure of multiplayer means that they'll probably never touch the campaign, and for good reason: *Call Of Duty* online is still the most fun you can have in the shortest amount of time online, pornography aside. Totally different to *Battlefield* yet equally as brilliant, *Modern Warfare 3* has stuck to its guns and come out shooting. Or something.

Still heavily focused on run-'n'-gun, spray-'n'-pray gametypes, this is *Call Of Duty* as you always remembered it. There are changes, but beware: if you hated *COD* before then there's nothing for you here.

Probably the biggest new element when it comes to the overall game is the new Strike Package system. Comprising Assault, Support and Specialist rewards, they're designed to enable online Rambos to get the most out of the game no matter how you play.

If you're a good shot (or a 13 year old) then Assault is the classic *Call Of Duty* killstreak package. If you're constantly getting killed by good shots (or 13 year olds) then Support is for you. Enabling players to call in defensive killstreaks such as multiple care packages,

upgraded UAVs and even juggernaut suits they're designed to help people help the team while also being rewarded themselves, as your streak doesn't reset on death.

Finally, Specialist is for true professionals only. Giving those with the skills the ability to add up to three extra perks to their originally allotted three, this is for the ninjas out there, but it at least gives the ubermen-children something to shoot for.

They're good additions, especially the Support package, but they don't really change things up in a major way. Neither does the main new gametype Kill Confirmed. Players have to kill their opponents in classic fashion, but then they (or a team-mate) have to collect the dog tags from the enemy's body. If the enemy does it before you, it's no points for the team. It's fun, don't get us wrong, and it actually puts the 'Team' in Team Deathmatch, something that's been absent from that mode for some time. But it's not an earth-shattering addition, and you'll soon find yourself heading back to good ol' TDM or Headquarters before long.

More promising, however, are the new Private Match gametypes. For those of you that prefer playing with friends rather than randoms, the new customisation features on show will be the perfect addition to a game that's already pretty damn good. Massive flexibility enables you to create your own gametypes: define the length, the amount of kills, the weapons, and the rules, and you can then share these with all your friends. We played two new (to *COD*) gametypes: Infection, a gloriously tense game where players killed by the infected switch sides to hunt the remaining players down, and Dropzone. This mode sees players try to hold

a certain spot on the map. If they do, they're rewarded with more points and regular care package drops. Similar to King Of The Hill the games soon become tense battles for control, and overall it's great fun.

It's a suite that could change everything you know about *Call Of Duty* online, but it has to be said that the main online modes, while still great, haven't evolved that much. That said *Modern Warfare 3* is still a superb package: one that easily bests *MW2* and just overcomes *Black Ops*, and will keep you entertained for months. Precisely 12, in fact.

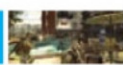
Steve Burns

VERDICT

Feels like a true sequel to the original *Modern Warfare* in every way, and banishes the memory of *MW2*'s sorry campaign. The multiplayer is still shockingly playable but it's not a huge leap over what's come before. That said, *COD* fans are going to love this.

88%

In this series



Modern Warfare 2 Issue 186
Good, but *Modern Warfare 3* is the game to beat these days. **94%**

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Assassin's Creed Revelations

Making Firenze and influencing people



Approximately the 408th *Assassin's Creed* game released since the first entry made its debut in 2007,

Revelations reminds us of lead character/mass murderer Ezio Auditore: still able to deliver the goods, but creaking under the pressure of constantly being pressed into action. Essentially *Assassin's Creed II: Part 3*, *Revelations* delivers a familiar blend of fantastic historical intrigue, evocative, wondrous settings and outrageous design contradictions. It's also the game that shows that Ubisoft's yearly cycle is harming the franchise, yet is still somehow strong enough to come out of the other side smiling.

As in *Assassin's Creed II* and *Brotherhood*, *Revelations* succeeds in spite of many aspects of its design, not because of them, a curious achievement that not many games can boast. *Assassin's Creed Revelations* never, ever sticks to its own rules, especially when it comes to the 'stealth' aspects of the game, which you would consider to be quite important for a game with 'Assassin's' in the title. That is of course until you realise that these games are getting churned out at a rate that would make most sweatshops blush: there's just no time to fix the flaws with a yearly release date, which is only going to become more apparent as Ubisoft chucks new features on top of failing ones and calls it progress.

So you find yourself wading through teeth-gnashing nonsense like failing a mission because your quarry or his guards spotted you, only to call in a hail of arrows from your fellow assassins on your next attempt, killing everything around the target in a hail of death, which is merely shrugged off and the mission continues. You can assassinate soldiers in full view of Constantinople's cosmopolitan townspeople with barely a batted eye, but climb on to a rooftop and you



DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
Ubisoft Montreal
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action Adventure
Age Rating
15
Website
assassinscreed.ubi.com/revelations/en-GB/home/
Twitter
@assassinscreed
Facebook
facebook.com/#!/assassinscreed

might as well be wearing a luminous cape that says 'Murderer At Work'.

Similarly, attempting to wrest control of a Templar den to increase your influence on the city is often met with the frustration of the Templar captain running into a house upon your arrival. Although Ezio is somehow capable of unravelling an ancient conspiracy that's laced with double-crosses, betrayals and dizzying consequences, he's unable to open a simple wooden door and the game informs you that 'you'll have to try again tomorrow'. Frustrating, to say the least.

These sort of irritants litter the interactions with your enemies, with each instance

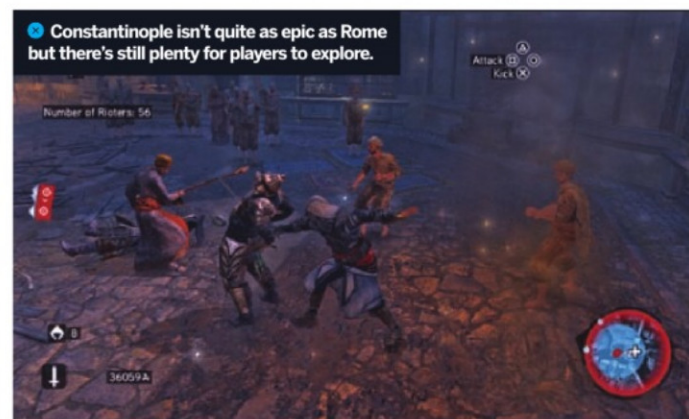
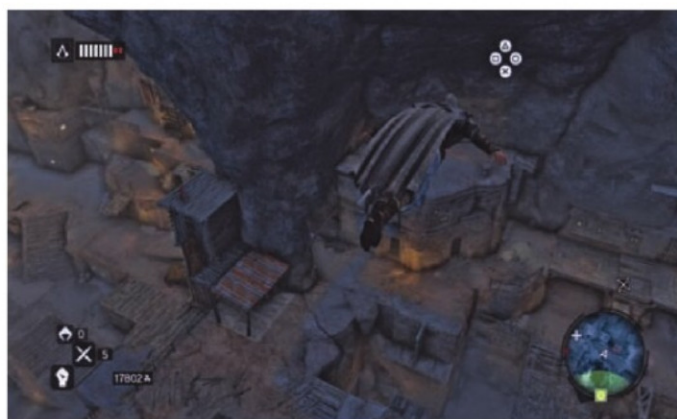
yanking you out of the experience. It's prohibitively maddening to try to complete the missions by playing as the game thinks you should, and all too easy to rely on breaking the rules: when you're asked to assassinate a target without being noticed

Assassin's Creed Revelations succeeds in spite of many aspects of its design, not because of them

and you can do it with the loudest, most primitive gun in history without penalty, or can't target an opponent correctly because of the shoddy lock-on (particularly galling now your foes have guns) and instead resort to taking on five guys at once, you have to



The people are doing you a fav



Constantinople isn't quite as epic as Rome but there's still plenty for players to explore.



vor, Ezio. Return it, and keep them safe
om harm.

● An ageing Ezio makes his way to Constantinople to continue his war against the Templars.

wonder what exactly Ubisoft Montreal is doing – apart from moving straight onto the next game the nanosecond this one was finished, that is.

All of this is made all the worse by the controls. While the animations are still beautiful, the control system is as fiddly and over complicated as it's always been: any game that has to have its controls on-screen almost all the time can't boast user-friendliness, and compared to the smooth world-traversal abilities at your disposal in *Batman: Arkham City*, *Assassin's Creed* is starting to look very dated indeed.

Yet somehow, somehow, the series survives, thrives, on the strength of its historical setting and the intoxicating thrill of being in it and seeing how the narrative connects to Ubisoft Montreal's excellent world-building skill. Although the series' sci-fi trappings are just absolute guff – and only get worse in *Revelations* – the way that fictional characters weave in and out of the lives of some of history's greatest figures is geek-out revisionism at its best. This feeling of being in and actually affecting the world is *Assassin's Creed's* greatest strength, helped immensely by the likeable characterisation of Ezio Auditore.

Now closer to getting his bus pass than the ladies, *Revelations'* Ezio is more pensive than his former self, punctuating missions ➤



Assassin's Creed Revelations



DESMOND IS BACK!

Sadly, he's still crap

AS YOU'RE PROBABLY aware, we're not huge fans of *Assassin's Creed's* sci-fi trappings, and not just because the main character goes by the name of Desmond. Wanting to change things up again, and having obviously played *Portal 2* a little too much, Ubisoft Montreal has given us *Animus Island*. Not that we wanted it.



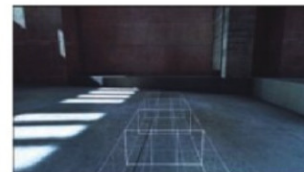
The game starts here, and punches you back out when it needs to give you some exposition or you finish a memory sequence. A sort of limbo, it's where Desmond's mind has been dumped as he attempts to find his way back to his body via the Animus.



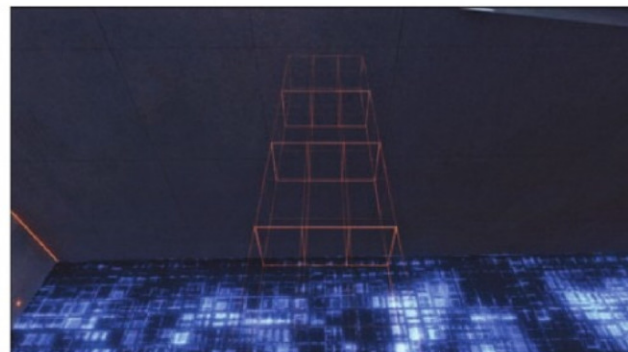
Which is fair enough. That is until you collect five 'Animus fragments' from around Constantinople and are invited back to the island. Being a polite fellow, you do it and enter one of these massive monoliths. What delights await?



Oh. Rather than something Good, or Interesting, instead we get the most inert puzzle sequence we've ever seen. Worse still, we get to hear Nolan North's voice yet again as he explains Desmond's back story, about growing up on a farm and hating his parents because they turned him into an assassin.

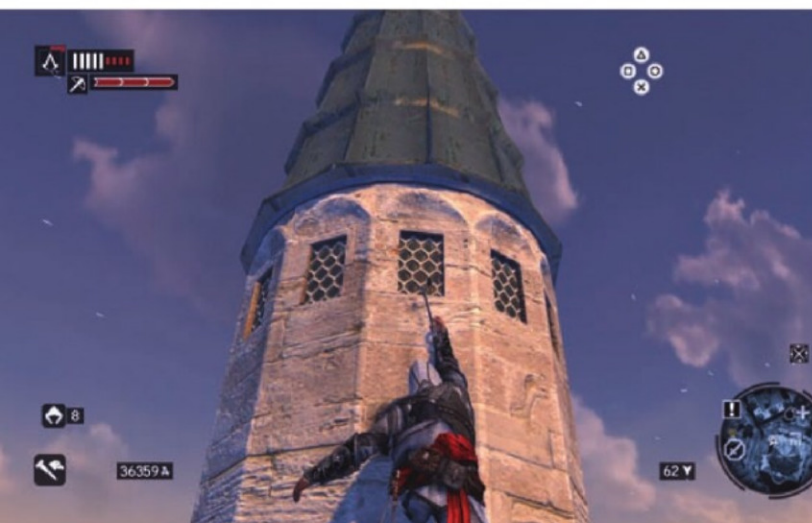


Which isn't actually too bad, shedding light on a character who has mainly spoken only in 'huhs'? since day one. Sadly, the gameplay is so boring it's difficult to care. Case in point: here's a door switch, like this is *Doom* or something. In fact, playing these levels with the soundtrack from the first level of *Doom* actually improves things no end.



Sadly, then there's stuff like this: first-person platforming. *Turok* on N64 shot a warning forward through time to developers never to do this sort of thing again. Sadly, Ubisoft decided that walking around with a giant wireframe penis sticking out in front of you was Good Thinking, and so we do more imprecise jumping. If things weren't bad enough, there are also instant fail condition triggered if you touch certain blue platforms. Not cool.





GETTING EZIO HOOKED

We love the... hook blade

ALTHOUGH A LOT of *Assassin's Creed Revelations* new mechanics don't add too much to the game in the way of improvement, the new Hook blade is a fundamental addition that should feature in every game from here to *'Assassin's Creed 8,003'* (roughly slated for release around 2012).

As good as the climbing was in the previous *Assassin's Creed* games, there was always the pad-snapping frustration of missing a jump and falling to your death/having to climb back up. The hook blade, a telescoping grappling hook of sorts, renders this obsolete, enabling Ezio to make more daring leaps and traverse the environment quicker. It can also be used to pull enemies towards you in combat, or vault over their heads when fleeing.

> by writing letters to his sister Claudia and generally ruing the Assassin's life. Lured to 12th Century Turkey to continue his war against the secret society of Templars who seek to rule the world with an iron fist, *Revelations'* narrative is split nicely into two main axes: the first being Ezio's mission to uncover a Templar threat to the Sultanate of Constantinople, the other being an exploration of Altair's life and legacy facilitated by missions for Sofia Sartor, whom Ezio has a thing for.

The two play out in parallel very nicely indeed, intersecting each other and breaking up the mission variety with skill.

While the 'main' missions are focused on exerting control over the city by fair means or (mostly) foul, the Sofia/Altair missions provide a more leisurely exploration of the city. Of the two branches, the latter is far superior. Less combat-orientated, there's a great sense of discovery as Ezio recovers ancient texts that hold the keys (literally) to opening Altair's temple, a prize that the Assassins and Templars are racing to claim as their own because of the Apple of Eden's importance to that sci-fi nonsense that Ubisoft cooked up.

Hidden in vertiginous climbs and underground lairs around the city, these missions play to the series' strengths: exploration, adventure, treasure hunting on a grand scale, a true playground. The introduction of ziplines on Constantinople's

rooftops speeds up traversal immensely, and the new grappling hook-style blade makes those frustrating near-missed jumps a thing of the past, while also speeding up climbing. These missions take perfect, natural advantage of the new additions, making exploring the city a joy.

It also doesn't hurt that finding the books is mostly punctuated by excellent set pieces that rival *Uncharted* for their scope and scale. Like that game, these sections alternate

Assassin's Creed Revelations is by turns beautifully playable and hideously frustrating

between desperate, high-altitude climbing and on-rails, cinematic combat, sometimes combining the two: a particular favourite sees Ezio navigating a series of collapsing platforms while chasing a boat down a series of rapids.

Upon overcoming these obstacles you then get to play as Altair himself, filling in the history of the Creed since the events of the first game (which, nicely, the game correctly takes the piss out of for being not very good). Chronicling the downfall into hatred and self destruction of both Altair and the Creed, returning to Masyaf, the original game's Syrian setting, makes a pleasant change from Constantinople, while also fleshing out both characters' stories, bringing a considered end to both Altair and Ezio's arcs. These moments are clearly *Assassin's Creed* at its best.

Previously...
in Play



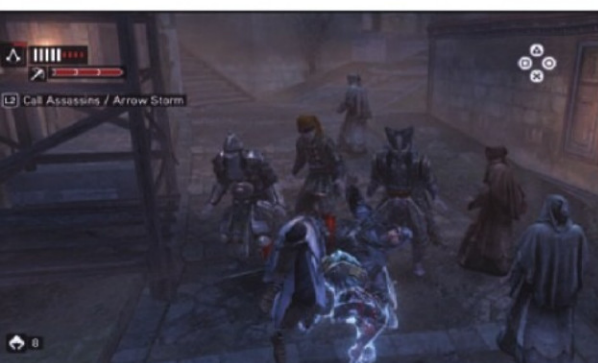
PREVIEWED Issue 211

"As long as Ubisoft keeps things fresh, we could have yet another brilliant slice of historical murder on our hands."



Assassin's Creed Revelations

Ubisoft has tweaked the *Assassin's Creed* formula for *Revelations*, with mixed success.



Ezio and Altair still have a selection of brutal moves at their disposal to dispatch enemies.

Outside of the missions, Ubisoft has tweaked the formula with mixed success. New additions such as the bomb crafting, where players can collect items to form their own explosives for use in missions, seems superfluous and fiddly, and not especially important. The new tower defence mini-game that tasks you with seeing off Templars attempting to reclaim your districts is tokenism, back-of-the-box bulletpoint thinking and little more than an irritation.

Conversely, the returning guild/brotherhood building and real estate buying elements are far stronger. Ezio can recruit followers from around the city and then send them to fight wars in the Mediterranean (which gives you and them stats boosts), level them up for use in his army, and access side missions from Assassins successfully groomed to the rank of master. Couple this with the *Farmville*-style addiction of buying shops, landmarks and banks and there's a real feeling that you're slowly taking control of every aspect of a city. Constantinople might not be as memorable as Rome, bordering on dull in places (no doubt exacerbated by the constant yellow haze of the art direction) but

it is very well built and purposely designed for players to pour their time and effort into, and reward them when they do.

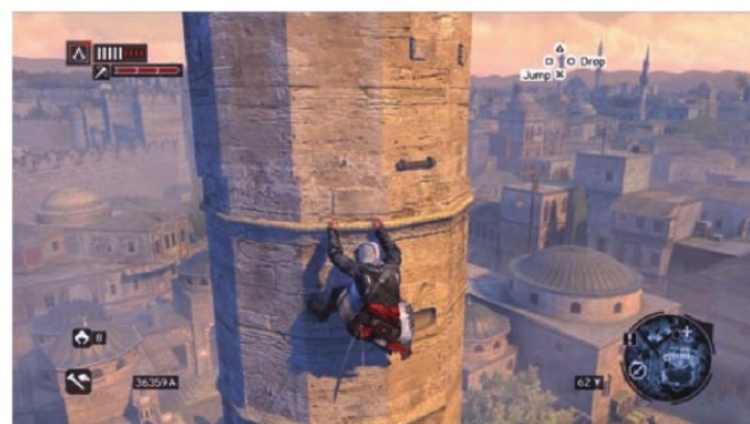
The important point, however, is that these aren't *Revelations'* innovations, and it speaks volumes that the new mechanics aren't a patch on the old. Just as Ubisoft has seen fit to draw Ezio's story to a close and opt to focus on new beginnings, it must do the same with the template that's age and flaws are becoming more and more obvious. *Assassin's Creed Revelations* is by turns beautifully playable and hideously frustrating, engaging and repulsive, graceful and then grotesque. It's an outrageously addictive experience, but you can have too much of a good thing. Just ask Lara Croft.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Still capable of the sort of enjoyment that makes you feel like a child in a playground again, *Assassin's Creed Revelations* buckles under the weight of familiarity, irrelevant additions and overlooked flaws.

75%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

Warning: This game is bad for your health



DETAILS

Publisher
Bethesda

Developer
In-house

Price

£49.99

Players

1

Genre

RPG

Age Rating

15

Website

elderscrolls.com

Twitter

@BethBlog

Facebook

http://goo.gl/yDoLY

PS3

There's no clever or cute way to start this review. Really, there isn't. Nothing that can quite convey the devastating effect *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* will have on your free time and free will. Looking at the almost pathetic excuses we've used thus far to avoid social engagements ("I, erm, I... sorry, no" followed by hanging up has been quite effective) and the complete neglect for anything else in our lives, we're surprised *Skyrim* doesn't come with a warning of some sort. Forget *Grand Theft Auto* and the like – *Daily Mail's* been aiming its ire at the wrong target all these years.

"But **Play!**" you cry. "Isn't *Skyrim* just some nonsense about trolls and goblins?" Time for an education. Let's start at the beginning. Sentenced to execution, *Skyrim* opens as you're carted off to die in solemn fashion. Having seen one of the other prisoners decapitated in front of you, you're next on the chopping block when a dragon shows up and all hell breaks loose. Given their status as a legendary creature in Tamriel, and the whole fire-breathing shtick they have, chaos ensues and you break free.

Recounting story is hardly the fist-slamming, blood-pumping way to kick off a review you'd want for a game that's scored 93% (admit it, you've already looked at the score) but it's

necessary here, as the intro is the only part of *Skyrim* guaranteed to be shared by all. Once you escape the fiery ashes of what would have been your final resting place, how the rest of the game plays out is up to you. With its freeform structure and ridiculous amount of distractions through side-quests and exploration, you could play for hours, days, weeks, months without ever troubling the main storyline, leaving the Greybeards awaiting your arrival to die of boredom and arthritis.

Choice has become a trendy byword in games development recently but in *Skyrim*, choice really is choice

The emphasis, as with all *Elder Scrolls* games, is on choice. Choice has become a trendy byword in games development recently but in *Skyrim*, choice really is choice. Not choose-the-blue-paragon-answer-or-the-naughty-red answer (don't send angry emails *Mass Effect* fans – we still love you!) but actual, tangible choice with where you go, what you look like, how you play and what you do. That starts with your first cautious steps of exploration and the first surprise is how *Skyrim's* map initially feels fairly small and quite bland. Extended play shows this is the

result of you starting your adventure in a town by the largest, emptiest field in the entire game. A strange decision then but once you start exploring the snowy mountains, shipwrecks on beaches, abandoned caves, spooky swamps and medieval forts, it's one you quickly forgive and forget.

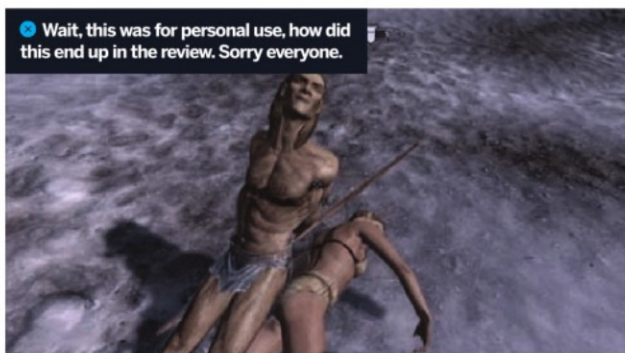
The combat is simplicity married to endless nuance. That's our fancy way of saying you can mash the shoulder buttons at the most basic, sausage-thumbed level but there are other

factors influencing battles such as your stamina, the enemy you're up against, the area you're in and so on. Narrow corridors? Lead enemies towards

you. Guard hiding behind shield? Let them swing first and get in your own blow while they're exposed. Dragon? Just bloody run.

Even then, your choice of playing style will lead to further tactical considerations. Those who build themselves as swashbuckling tanks with paranoid eyeballs peeping through a wall of steel armour may want to specialise in blocking and forging their own weapons rather than, say, lock-picking and enchanting. Archers will naturally want to opt for sneaking, while dabbling in alchemy ensures poisons are always on hand to be applied to their arrows. Those going down the magic route have a wealth of options with their spells from raising the undead to mass paralysis.

And this is before you even take into consideration further specialist routes – assassins can stick to shadows and use juicy backstab buffs to clear their path, wizards can turn invisible like a cheap circus magician to avoid conflict and the indecisive can dual wield a spell in one hand and weapon in the other. The choice, as they say and as we're at pains to point out, is yours.

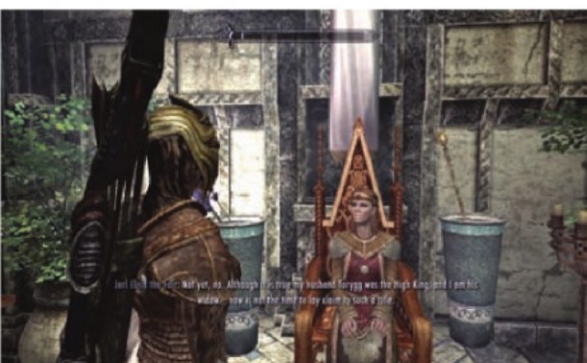




SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

How the world reacts to you

ONE OF THE nicest touches in *Skyrim* is how the world reacts to what you're doing. Guards will comment on you depending on what you've done in the world – the party you crashed as an uninvited guest, the factions you've taken control of and so on. Yet even better is the smaller things you do. Using a dragon shout in a town will have villagers stunned and questioning what they've just seen, while running up and down tables kicking people's food off will have them grumpily tell you to watch what you're doing. Just like real life! We think. We've never actually done anything like kicking someone's Subway sandwich out of their hands just as they're about to eat it.



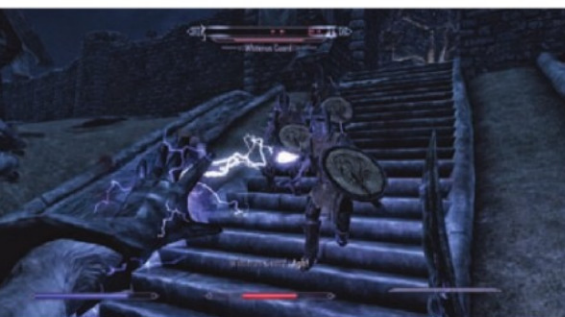
What's smart is that your development in *Skyrim* is natural, with your skills levelling up the more you use them. This neatly avoids the RPG pratfall of ticking character progression boxes you later regret – you can only build a character in the way you're playing. RPGs of this nature can also suffer from endless micro-management and Bethesda has done well to trim away at some of the fat. Weapons and armour no longer degrade through use so you don't have to keep checking and repairing while conversations can be influenced by bribing, intimidation, persuasion or bare-fist brawling rather than *Oblivion*'s bizarre Trivial Pursuit wheel with comedy facial reactions.

In short, everything from the interface to the menus have been overhauled for ease of use. In less short, through *Skyrim*, Bethesda

has finally found a way of streamlining its *Elder Scrolls* series for consoles without losing any of the qualities that makes this feel like the huge built-for-a-nuclear-powered-PC RPG it is at heart. The only real clue left to the heritage of the series is the cumbersome nature of the Favourites sub-menu. Designed as a way to quickly let you switch weapons, spells or armour on the fly to save a trip to the main inventory menus, it doesn't actually prove any quicker than simply exhaling and taking the slightly longer trek to said menu. Likewise, it takes a few I-wanted-the-quest-journal-not-the-map mishaps before the controls become second nature. After a while, it's easy to take for granted how easy it is to play *Skyrim*.

You'll also take for granted how absorbed you become in *Skyrim*'s world. Selling a >





See, they're shouting that because we're playing as Khajit. Racism = confirmed!

> world of trolls, goblins and ye olde fantasy lore to a generation of gamers reared on steroid shooters can't be an easy task – you only have to recall the forsooths and mayhaps of *Two Worlds* to remember what happens when this goes wrong. Yet *Skyrim* never flirts with accidental comedy as it's so fully committed to weaving the illusion of a believable world in a long-lost era that you'll be pulled along with it. When Greybeards speak to you in dragon tongue – yes, this *actually happens* – it's something you fully embrace, not something to be looked up on YouTube to email around under a 'lol this is dumb' heading the next day.

What helps sell the illusion is the world itself is far more believable. *Skyrim*'s Tamriel has geography dictate your passage through cliffs, mountains and waterfalls as much as the black and white arrow on your compass does. *Oblivion* tried this trick, too, but the difference is the landscape doesn't feel as forced, mostly because you have believable obstructions rather than vertically stretched land with textures pulled to breaking point blocking your path. Likewise, characters you interact with are no longer relegated to horrifying mannequins with moving mouths. They'll

This is where you make potions. There's no humour here. It's a factual caption.



Step back, dodge blow, get in your own attack. There's our exclusive walkthrough.

cut short arguments among themselves and apologise when you draw near, finger places on the map they want you to visit, point out mountains in the distance and the like. While all this is happening, the weather cycles through clear mornings, rainy afternoons, red dawns and star-dotted nights. While the mystery of *Skyrim*'s storyline pulls you all over Tamriel, Bethesda is as happy for you to play virtual tourist as you are spell-casting adventurer.

While those story hoops are fun to jump through, with its linear path ensuring spectacular set pieces and scripted moments are quietly woven into its fabric without you noticing, the side-quests and small stories that connect them are what really form the heart of *Skyrim*'s adventure. It's the Dark Brotherhood assassin you find crouching in a forest to ambush you, carrying a death warrant with your name on it. It's the ghost of a child who dies in a mysterious house fire, playing hide and seek before giving you crucial information on what really happened. It's the treasure maps that are actual treasure maps, giving you

pictures of landmarks and dotted lines leading to a red X. It's the statue that beams you to the skies of Tamriel for a conversation, the threat of you falling to your death underpinning its aggressive demands.

Most impressive of all, dragons aren't just wheeled out for the sake of drama in the storyline. Bethesda lets them roam free throughout Tamriel, a constant threat to the idle adventurer. In one brilliant moment that sums up all of *Skyrim*'s strengths, we ventured out of town picking flowers (for potions... don't judge us) when the shadow of a dragon flashed past the snowberries we were reaching for. The pad rumbled as a huge roar could be heard in the distance. Breathing fire across the dense forest we were cowering in, the dragon gave chase as we ran back to the village we just left. Upon seeing the dragon above them blocking out the sun, the villagers ran inside their homes while the guards came out in full force, firing arrows at the beast. After a five-minute battle the dragon fell and the guards stood around the fallen creature in shock, asking if it's really





● Looks terrifying, sadly easy to kill. Sorry. That's why dragons are in the game, too.

dead and if they really had slayed a dragon. This is a small drama we essentially created ourselves by leading the dragon back to the village, partly to see what would happen, mostly because we were being massive cowards. Bethesda, always one step ahead, accounted for this possibility and hearing the guards talking about the event after the fact makes it feel personal.

Not every lesson has been learnt from *Oblivion*. That game saw Bethesda shooting for The Dullest Opening Hour In Videogames award, as you trudged around after Patrick Stewart for an hour while his knees creaked and he mumbled about the jaws of *Oblivion*. *Skyrim* is courteous enough that you begin its adventure in fresh air rather than the putrid browns of *Oblivion*'s sewers but it still locks you on rails as you're walked through the controls. A necessary evil given the dizzying scope of the adventure but an evil nevertheless. Likewise, while *Skyrim* doesn't suffer from any fatal glitches there are a few moments where you can see the gamecode being stretched tighter

than it can handle over the huge landscape – some see-through forest floors, transparent rocks and the like.

Yet if those are both the price to pay for a game this good, it's worth the cost. *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* builds open everything *Oblivion* did well and makes a mockery of those who made excuses for that game, as Bethesda has shown it's possible to make a game this broad, this ambitious and this big without having to make concessions elsewhere. Brilliant in every way – just remember to fix your social circle once you're done. If you ever get done, that is...

Ryan King

VERDICT

Building upon everything that made *Oblivion* such a joy, *Skyrim* has easily secured the crown as the biggest game this gen and also as one of the best. Even if you don't ordinarily like ye olde fantasy RPGs, this is brilliant.

93%

BECOME ROBIN HOOD! SORT OF

Sculpting a character the way you want



LEVEL UP ARCHERY enough by using your bow and arrows wherever possible and you can unlock Eagle Eye and Steady Hand, which slows down time when you zoom in for a shot.



YOU SHOULD ALSO equip light armour (makes less noise, you see) and add an Enchantment to your bow. You can add magical damage or soul traps, to create further enchantments.

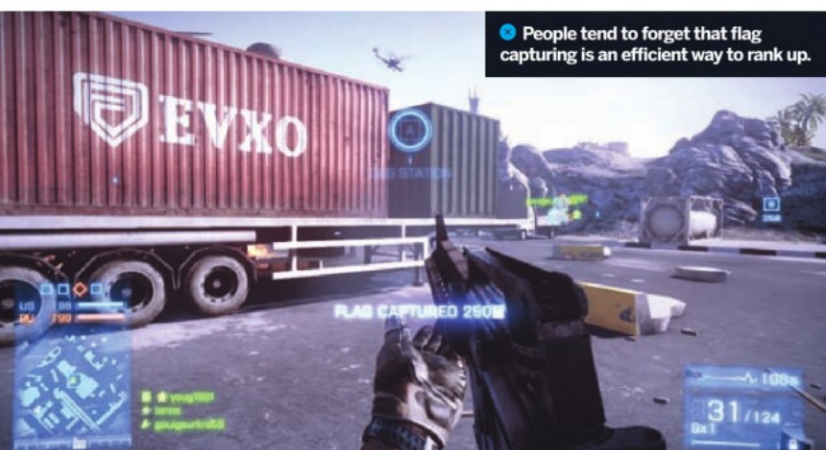


COMPLETE THE MISSIONS for the Jarl of Dragonreach, seen here, and he'll give you a choice of item as a reward. Take the gauntlets for a 20% damage bonus when using bows.



FINALLY, BUILD UP Sneak to get the 3x bonus when you hit enemies unseen and you're done! The teething problems playing as an archer are painful but the pay-off makes it worthwhile.





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Battlefield 3

Forever alones need not apply



DETAILS

Publisher
EA
Developer
DICE
Price
£49.99
Players
1-24
Genre
FPS
Age Rating
18
Website
www.battlefield.com
Twitter
@Battlefield
Facebook
facebook.com/pages/Battlefield-3/137409672949139



EA's own campaign of shock and awe, featuring our good friends hype and hyperbole, appeared to shoot itself in the foot in recent months. From a thundering giant of a marketing campaign in which the publisher barely set a foot wrong, it suddenly... well, it went a bit wrong. All of a sudden *Battlefield 3* wasn't the golden darling of all gaming we had been led to believe it was. So what is it instead? Oh, just vying for the position as best online shooter

The simple fact of the matter is you should not be looking at this as a worthwhile single-player game

on the console, that's all. Just don't mention the single-player.

Played online with a good bunch of people, *Battlefield 3* is an exercise in one of those things that makes you forget all the stupid little foibles and quibbles that were running rampant before its release. Yes, it doesn't look as good as the PC version and requires an install just shy of 2GB before you can play (as well as the initial 200MB+ patch). Yes, it



doesn't have 500-player each side matches, or whatever it is we're supposed to crave. Yes, the maps are a bit smaller than those on the gaming rigs that aren't made with five-year-old technology. But when you're playing, it really doesn't matter: DICE does good online shooty bangs. DICE does *really* good online shooty bangs.

On loading up *Battlefield 3* we'd recommend you jump straight into the online portion, naturally, as that is the main (arguably only) draw here. Pick your kit, your weapons, add-ons and perks and get blasting. Well, pick them once you've levelled up a bit, as initial choice is a bit limited. But a steady flow of unlocks, bonuses, ribbons and medals means while you might not get a new gun after every round, you are likely to get some kind of award. A trophy that says 'saddest', maybe.

It's this constant feeling of making progress that will keep you playing *Battlefield 3* and keep you coming back for the age-old 'just one more' game. Then, of course, there's Battlelog, where you can keep track of your stats alongside those of other players across the world – it's not mandatory you join in, but it is a nice – and free, it should be pointed out – extra.

But like useless, cretinous morons we've jumped straight into what will keep you playing *Battlefield 3* for a long period of time, rather than what will draw you in in the first place. Is it the balanced, nuanced battles that have a real ebb and flow to them? Yes. Is it the vaguely intelligent playing style required, meaning simple run-'n'-gunning won't bring too much success? Yes. Is it the bloody idiot snipers who just camp up on a hillside for entire matches? No, not so much. But you



can still rain down tank-flavoured fury on them, just like in *Bad Company 2*, and this time you can even throw in some air-based fury from the numerous jets that have been made available in multiplayer.

It's a simple formula that rewards players as much for working together as it does for experimentation and generally making up tactics on the fly. Fancy being a spotter? Get on the side of a chopper for a ride and tap select on every enemy you see – watch the points rack up. In fact, we reckon you'll still be able to win rounds by following the path of the pacifist – handing out health and healing team-mates rather than shooty-banging people in the face. It's things like that that make *Battlefield 3* a true online great.

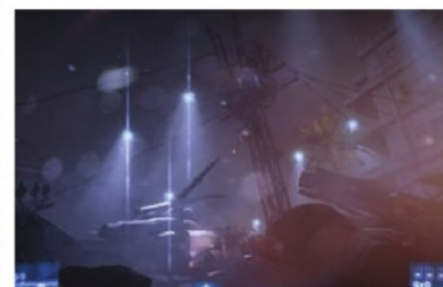
But wait! It's not all good. No, there is also a single-player portion to *Battlefield 3*. It's not offensively bad, but we are talking worse than





DOESN'T IT LOOK RUBBISH?

We'll let you judge for yourselves



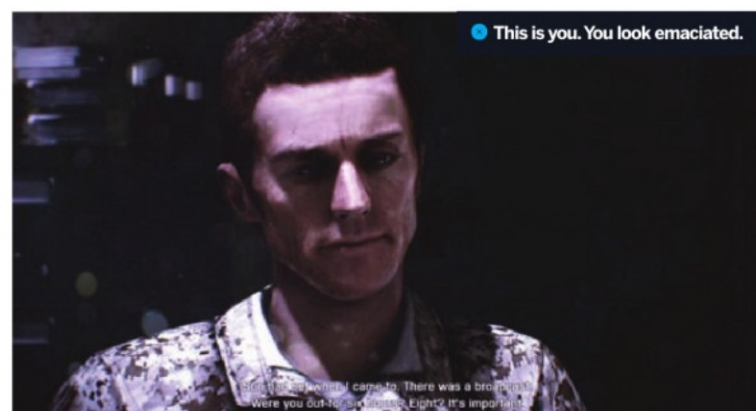
Bad Company 2's single-player. Worse than *Black Ops*. Worse than *Homefront's*. Worse than *Medal Of Honor's*. Though not worse than *Brink's* single-player, but that's hardly saying anything.

No, what we have here is a mode barely worth bothering with – the five or so hours it will take you to finish it won't be spent having fun, except for one or two of the levels, and it will feel like a massive waste of time. Representing war in such an anal, attention to detail-obsessed fashion hurts the experience by making it bland, empty and boring. Firefights – which should be huge, exciting, pitched battles – devolve into popping in and out of cover to try to whittle down enemy numbers. Slowly. Slowly. Pop pop pop. Rat a tat tat. Snore.

But it isn't just dull – we reviewed *Battlefield 3* from retail code, as in what you

buy in the shops, with the sizeable day one patch installed. And it was noticeably glitchy. From the (at least) four crashes requiring a system restart, through the many, many clipping issues that saw enemy and ally soldiers simply running *through* massive obstacles. And walls. It is, not to put too fine a point on it, crap. A triple-A release from one of the biggest publishers in the world, finished code, a patch applied and we had people gathering around to see what would go wrong next, rather than what exciting set piece we would see next.

Then there's the handholding, which manages to be both overbearing and not quite focused enough at the same time. Somehow. On one hand you have constant indicators on screen – 'MOVE', 'FOLLOW', 'FRIENDLY FIRE SOMETHING SOMETHING' – so you're never unsure as to what your ultimate objective is. >





> The problem is the bit in-between. Where, for example, other shooters will corral the player – skilfully or otherwise – into and through encounters and situations, *Battlefield* still has an element of freedom to it. Get to that objective, but you can go *around* that car if you want, instead of straight up the road. Sounds like nothing, but when we made a decision to approach said objective from an angle the game both allowed, yet didn't recognise, it led to a fair bit of bemusement. If you want us to approach something from a definite angle, we need to be *forced* to approach from that angle. The skill is in making that linearity fun, or giving an illusion of freedom. Allowing a small amount of freedom that actually breaks things somewhat just comes across as sloppy.

And those constant bloody QTE hand-to-hand battles are terrible. Genuinely, actually terrible. They serve no purpose, are devastatingly easy and don't even look or sound good. Pointless.

But we've wasted enough words whining about the worst part of the game. Just know this: *Battlefield 3* is not a game to buy if you're avoiding the online section – and be advised that a £7.99 online pass is required for those of you buying second-hand. Just a couple of points to bear in mind.

Once you're past the brief distraction of single-player, you can go back to multiplayer. Here it becomes instantly apparent that DICE does actually know what the hell it's doing. Here it becomes instantly apparent that *Battlefield 3* isn't actually pointless. Here it becomes apparent that *Bad Company 2* has been usurped as best online game on

PS3 (and let's not forget *MW3*, which has an equal hand in relegating *Bad Company 2* to yesterday's news).

While it's true that team deathmatch is a bit of a waste, there's no denying the rest of the modes on offer in *Battlefield 3* are absolutely brilliant. It's the retuning

DICE does good online shooty bangs. DICE does *really* good online shooty bangs

champions of Rush and Conquest that take the most plaudits simply by being so well designed and refined, but it would be silly not to give the entire basic setup of the online game mad props, yo. As the kids say.

Battlefield is a game that rewards team play more than other titles do. You can be a lone run-'n'-gun maestro if you want, but players wishing for that kind of atmosphere really would be better off sticking with the likes of *COD*. No, here it's all about working together and driving about in your APC as if it's the family runabout. The family runabout of death, that is. *Battlefield 3* instantly creates those moments you want to run and tell all your gaming friends about (you could tell the non-gaming ones, but they wouldn't understand) – the times when, without a word of communication, you found your squad laying down suppressing fire for another group on your team. The times when you're actually successful in a strafing run with the A-10, taking out a tank and allowing your ground troops to proceed. Or the times when you have

a whirlybird full of team-mates and you ditch out without warning, leaving them scrambling to regain control of the uppity flying machine. *Battlefield 3* online is home to some of the finest emergent gaming moments available anywhere – and it's for that reason it becomes something special. Yes, it even manages to transcend our regular Manshooter 9000 cynicism by just being so much of a hoot.

Is it a cop-out to admonish a game for poor single-player but still give it a high mark overall? In light of the quality on show in *Battlefield 3*'s multiplayer, we'd say no. But then we would, as we wrote these words. But however you frame it, the simple fact of the matter is you should not be looking at this as a worthwhile single-player game, but as something it should have remained from day one – a pure multiplayer experience. It is in that area that DICE shines, and it is in that area that *Battlefield 3* can come with a wholehearted recommendation. Just, seriously – don't talk about the single-player. We mentioned it once, but we think we got away with it.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Easily vying for the position of best multiplayer game on PS3, *Battlefield 3* is fantastic online and shows DICE's mastery in the field. The less said about the ignorable single-player, the better. It's not a game to buy for offline alone.

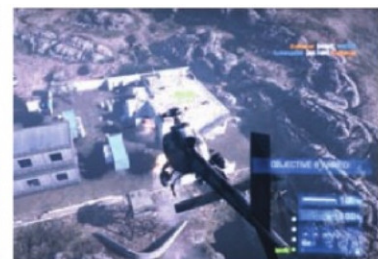
88%



AIR COMBAT

So good it deserves its own boxout

UNLIKE *BAD COMPANY 2'S* Vietnam expansion, you have to provide your own recording of *Ride Of The Valkyries* for *Battlefield 3*. It's worth it, though, with the aerial units available eclipsing the choice of the last iteration. An assortment of choppers – attack, transport, scout – can be flown around the sizeable maps in a haphazard fashion. Then you crash. And we see the return of jets to the series, with a number of different fighter planes from around the world able to make ridiculously speedy strafing runs and dogfight with glee. Then you crash. It adds a surprising amount to the experience.



In this series

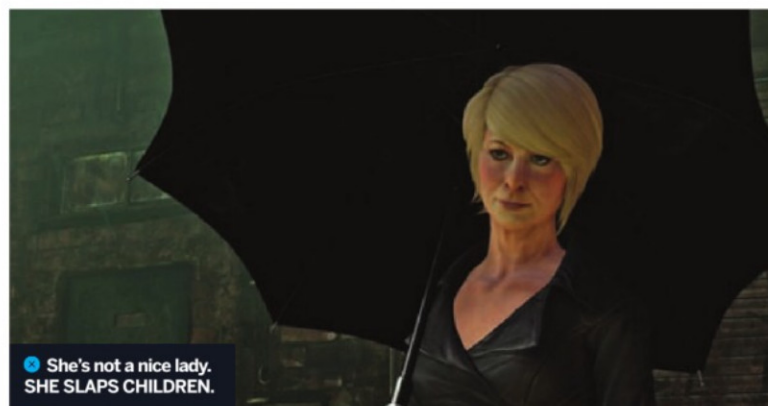


Battlefield: Bad Company 2 Issue 190
The former best multiplayer game on PS3, now supplanted. **93%**

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

The deception is in the title – this is very much Charted



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer
Naughty Dog
Price
£49.99
Players
1-10
Genre
Action adventure
Age Rating
15
Website
www.unchartedthegame.com
Twitter
@Naughty_Dog
Facebook
facebook.com/naughtydog

PS3

Well, this is a letdown. Not a letdown on the scale of something like *Rage* or *Red Faction: Armageddon* (hush down – some of us were let down by that one). No, this is a smaller letdown, but one that still feels like a gut punch – as if Naughty Dog has gone and pulled a bit of a fast one. In fact, we feel a bit ashamed to have bought into the pre-release hype as much as we did. Just proves that even old pros like us sometimes get a bit swept up in the whole business.

Definitely worth your time, definitely worth a look, but nowhere near the generation-defining experience *Uncharted 2* was

But this is getting ahead of ourselves – *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception* is a very good game. There's no doubting that. If we lived in a world where this was the first in the series, in a world where *Uncharted* simply didn't exist, this would be one of the most exhilarating, action-packed and ridiculous (in a good way) games we'd ever seen. But we live in a world where *Uncharted 2* does indeed exist, so it's very much a world where we've seen it all before.

Number three falls down, at least in the most part, by being thoroughly formulaic.

Before you strap your burning pitchforks to the angry emails you're about to send us (play@imagine-publishing.co.uk) – don't. Formulaic does not mean 'bad'. It means we've seen it all before, and that it's a standard experience. But then 'standard' in *Uncharted* terms means 'as good as other very good action games', so it's not really bad news. If anything, it's just news that bursts the hype

bubble we personally have had a hand in creating.

Drake's Deception is very much hamstrung by its

own design. It's fabulous – yes, fabulous – in parts, but it's so much that we've seen before in other parts. It's impossible to say anything about the game is genuinely bad, but this is not the step forward we would have liked it to be – it's not the step forward like we saw between the original game and *Among Thieves*. As such, familiarity, while not entirely breeding contempt, is certainly sowing the seeds of discontent. And mixed metaphors.

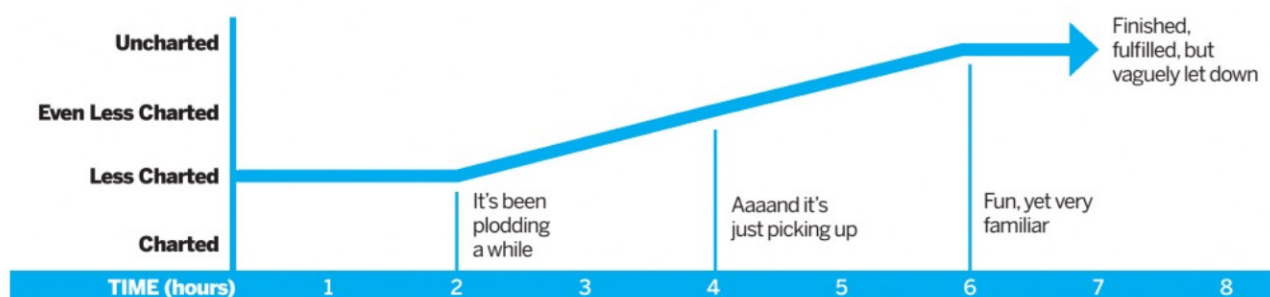
Ah, the good old British pub brawl.

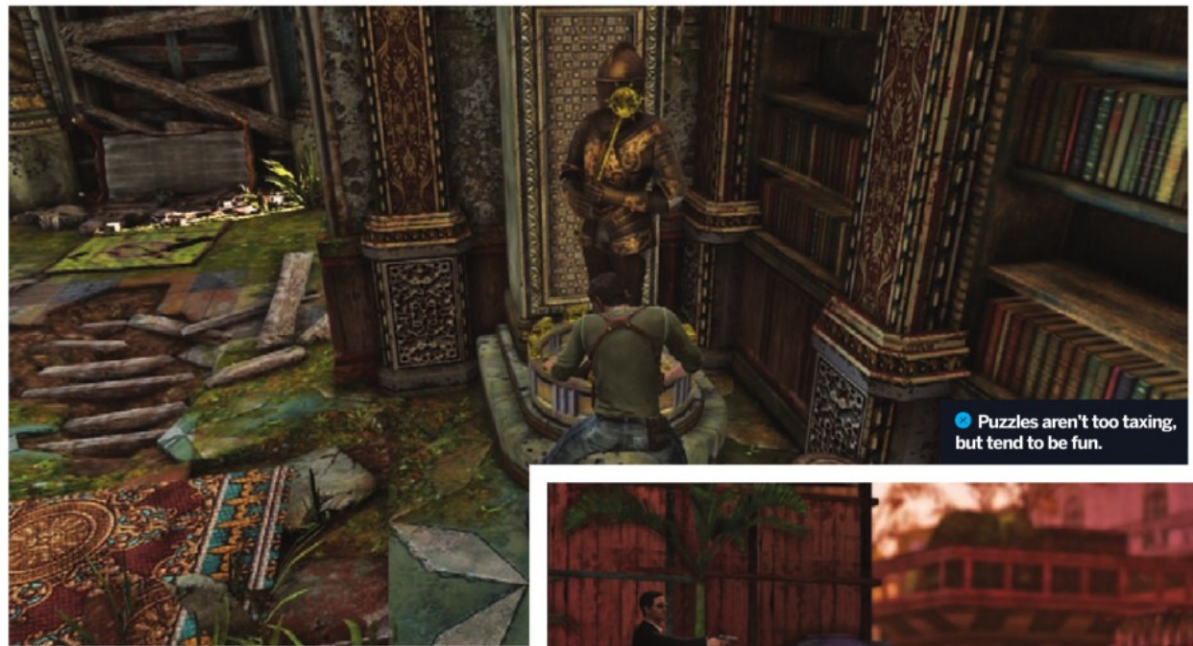


You know the drill – Nathan Drake is looking for something ancient, hidden and mystical. He's joined by a motley crew of ne'er do wells (also Elena), each voiced and acted in a far better fashion than most other games out there and each full of more quips than an automated quipping machine. Along the way you run, jump, shoot, punch, quip, solve puzzles, quip a bit more and generally do what we're used to doing in *Uncharted* games. If you've never played an *Uncharted* game before, this will be a beard slap of epic proportions to your gormless face. The thing is, we have played *Uncharted* games and so have many PlayStation 3 owners, and it has to be taken into account how little has changed since the last epic, mystical jaunt around the world. The answer is: very little. That's not a bad thing per se, as we are stressing to stress here, but it is a point that holds *Drake's*

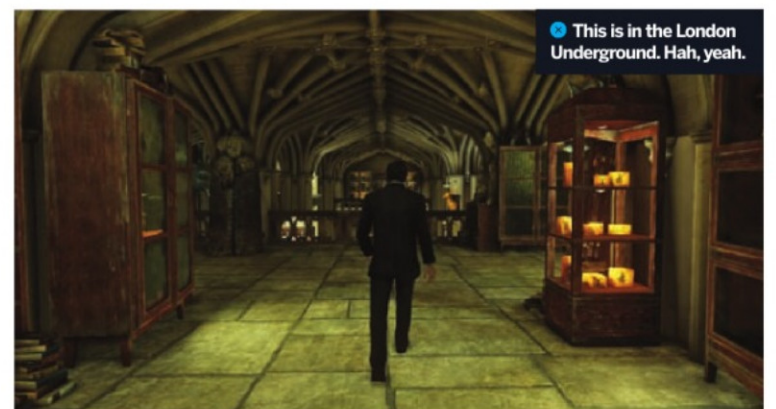
IN GRAPH FORM

Taking a leaf from a sister magazine, as it were





Puzzles aren't too taxing, but tend to be fun.



This is in the London Underground. Hah, yeah.

Deception back from the true greatness we had hoped for.

It took us seven hours to finish *Uncharted 3* on our first playthrough, at normal difficulty (thank Thor for stats screens). This isn't as long as the last two games, but it's not an insultingly short experience by any stretch of the imagination – in fact, we have no issue with the length. What we do take issue with is the pacing of the thing – the first third or so of the game is slow-paced, ponderous and scene-setting. Okay, that works sometimes. But it's not the most efficient use of time and, looking back, it actually feels like a bit of a waste.

Having said that, when *Drake's Deception* hits its stride it manages to produce some of the most entertaining set pieces and engaging action of any game this generation. When it gets it right – the cargo plane sequence or the desert convoy section for two quick examples

– it's the action movie experience we want from Nate and his chums. When you're levelling half a deserted settlement to take out that one pesky armoured truck, it's brilliant. When you're navigating a shipping graveyard, clinging to the rusted hull of a former oil tanker while dodging the bullets of a dozen pirates, it's great fun. It takes a bit too long for our liking to really get going at full pelt, but when it does you're provided with the set pieces and grandiose, nonsensical B-movie settings you would hope for.

Yet it's still same-old, same-old. While you're leaping between the rusting husks of seafaring vehicles that lack the 'faring' part of this particular description, you're still pausing to duck behind cover and take a few potshots at the two dozen identikit enemies in your way. It's still engaging enough and it's certainly no whitewash, difficulty-wise (more on that >

Or you could try



Tomb Raider Trilogy Issue 204
The series that offered a lot of inspiration to Drake's adventures. **86%**



> later), but there's nothing new to gunplay – no real steps forward, just a feeling that things are languishing, or settling on what's been established before. As a result it's hard not to feel a smidge underwhelmed by the shooty-bang part of *Uncharted 3*.

While we're whining a bit, let's cover some

other elements that grabbed our proverbial goat in an irritating fashion. Like how controls still suffer from the slight issues they had in the last game – infrequently, but enough for it to be noticeable, Drake will decide to jump in *completely the wrong direction*. In *Uncharted 2* it was an irritation, and in *Uncharted 3* it's still an irritation – but it's an irritation that should have been dealt with. That it hasn't leaves us a little concerned about where Naughty Dog's attention has been focused. Only a little, mind.

Number three falls down, at least in the most part, by being thoroughly formulaic

The same feeling comes with enemy encounters, which filled us with the kind of spiteful, rage-filled hate we never expected to come from an *Uncharted* game. Unless played on crushing, naturally. A plethora of enemies raining down fire on you, all capable of one-

hit kills does not a fun experience make. Yes, there are definite, defined ways to overcome these foes – but the feeling of cheapness, of old-fashioned and outdated design in the way some enemies can take multiple headshots, is something it's difficult to really justify. It also smacks of questionable design – can't think of a way to make this encounter more challenging in an organic, exciting way? Just smack another three RPG troops on top of that building in the distance. Sorted. Then

there's the grenades – oh! the grenades.

Indicators pop up when they are thrown at you, and the new ability to throw them back is implemented perfectly – really, it is. But the fact non-hand-thrown explosives have no similar marker is an oversight we simply don't understand. If it was merely a cosmetic thing, fine, but the fact it causes so many avoidable, irritating deaths means it leaves a sour taste.

Then, of course, there's the combat. While improved so context-sensitive attacks can be pulled off and brawls against multiple enemies are better than before, there's still minor cause for concern – namely in the form of unbreakable animations. What these do is leave you open to attack from other enemies you're not fistfighting with – and attack they will, the crafty flanking bastards. Again – not game-breaking, just rather annoying. Still, we should count ourselves lucky that these are the few genuine concerns with the design and mechanics of *Uncharted 3* we noticed.

Back to positivity, because it seems we're getting mired down talking about the things wot dun annoyed us. There are no arguments from this side on a technical level, with *Drake's Deception* proving to be a beautifully well-produced bit of *Indiana Jones* 'inspired' gaming fun. To give it a snappy title. Last time around we had the best snow in videogames, this time around we get the best sand (and maybe fire, though probably not). We get the beautiful vistas we would expect, the cut-scenes that are simply a cut (ho ho) above those produced by any other gaming company and the musical score that can't help but make you hum along in a suitably epic-humming fashion. This is an area, at least, where expectations have been met – maybe even surpassed. We're not talking storytelling on a level that will redefine gaming stories for the rest of forever, but *Uncharted 3* tells a fun tale regardless. It's simple, it borrows liberally from *Indiana Jones*



Yeah, that was probably Nate's fault.



▶ Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception



• You know the drill: cover, pop up, shoot, win.



• There's no Skelzor this time around, sadly.



• It has a child-sliding simulator section.



MULTIPLAYER BOXOUT: HOOOO!

Tacked-on opinions of tacked-on modes

UNCHARTED 3 ONLINE is a mixed bag, but said bag isn't totally without merit. Improvements and additions have been made, making it less of the tacked-on extra it was in *UC2* and more of a fleshed-out experience. All the same, games still feel a bit empty and it isn't always the most flowing of experiences with the game's stop/start climbing mechanics employed. When it hits its stride in objective-based modes *UC3* online is a lot of fun and can add something to the overall experience. It will keep you playing for a while after finishing the main game, but it still isn't as polished as its online-based competition.

And The Last Crusade and it's nowhere near as daring or shocking as we hoped it would be – but it's inoffensive and entertaining. While it doesn't finish with the cliffhanger we expected, it does wrap a number of things up nicely while at the same time leaving just about everything open enough for the inevitable sequel.

It may break our hearts to award an *Uncharted* game such a (relatively) low score, but *Drake's Deception* has indeed deceived us. We thought it would be the second (third?) coming – instead it's ended up *merely* being a very good game. Definitely worth your time, definitely worth a look, but nowhere near the generation-defining experience *Uncharted 2* was. And it's all *Uncharted 2*'s fault. But don't

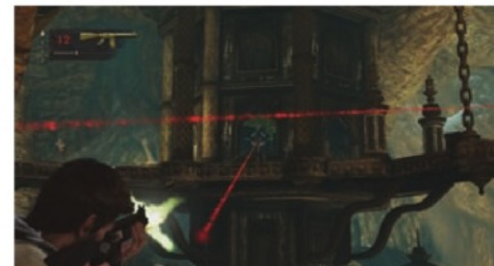
let our seeming negativity put you off – it's just deflation letting itself out, after all. *Uncharted 3* is fine entertainment and a fitting third instalment to the series. We just hope that number four, when it happens, takes a bigger step forwards for Drake and co.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It's frustrating and deflating to have to admit it, but *Drake's Deception* isn't another defining experience on PS3. It's still fantastic fun in the most part and worth picking up, but overfamiliarity holds it back from true greatness. Sorry, Nate.

90%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Sonic Generations

Born to run



DETAILS

Publisher

Sega

Developer

In-house

Price

£39.99

Players

1

Genre

Platformer

Age Rating

7

Website

sega.co.uk/games/

sonic-generations

Twitter

@SEGA

Facebook

facebook.com/

#!/Sega



Playing *Sonic Generations* has caused some deep questions to be asked here at **Play**. After hours of running around, jumping on animal's heads and doing the loop-de-loop, we found ourselves asking an important question: was *Sonic* ever really *that* good? We know it was good; in places it was even great (mainly the music and art direction) but does it deserve the level of rabid reverence it enjoys? Were we just thick/young/knew no better, or a combination of the above?

After playing through *Sonic Generations* we're inclined to believe it's the latter. Why? Because the classic *Sonic* gameplay is present and correct – much to the delight of the squealing infant-men that still hark back to the days when Blast Processing was even a thing – and it's very much the same as ye olden days. That said, bar the occasional moments of grin-inducing speed that crop up (before they're unceremoniously cut short when you run into an enemy/spikepit/whatever) we found ourselves tiring of the 2D gameplay after around an hour simply because there's just not enough to it apart from Run Really Fast Before Being Stopped Abruptly. Which is cool, but not nearly as cool as it was when we still thought that wrestling was real. Cheers nostalgia. Thanks for ruining everything.

To be fair to Sega, the amount of effort poured into *Sonic Generations* is impressive, and sure to send die-hard fans into a frenzy. Gameplay consists of navigating a beautifully drawn hub world that gives access to remixed versions of stages from *Sonic* games past: Green Hill Zone from the original game, City Escape level from *Sonic Adventure 2* and so on. They're wonderfully realised and as ever the music is superb.

The hub world is its own mini platformer as well: you have to explore it to find level-based mini challenges to unlock keys that give you access to boss fights and move the story along.

Throw in a boat load of collectables, a semi-RPG mechanic that enables you to customise your Sonic (for example making him run faster in water) and the full game of *Sonic The Hedgehog* and you've got a package that *Sonic* fans will lap up.

We found ourselves asking: was Sonic ever really that good?

Surprisingly, however, the strongest part of the package are the 3D sections. As the name suggests players take control of Sonics old and new: old for 2D, new for 3D. The stages are split into two acts, one for each gametype, and generally the second act of any level is far stronger given the inherent advantages that 3D viewpoint brings.

Sega struggled for years to get *Sonic* to work in 3D: anyone that's played *Sonic Adventure* will know how badly the developer has implemented the camera before. It's still not totally perfect – the reliance on using the lock-on dash attack to hit enemies (and hence clear certain bottomless pits) is over-relied on, especially when the lock-on can sometimes be a bit woolly. Also, said bottomless pits crop up a little too frequently when dashing at full speed, leading to frustrating deaths. On the whole, however, Sega has delivered with its implementation of 3D stages, dynamically altering the viewpoint to give players the best view of the course ahead and generally adding to the sensation of speed. Sega has also wisely kept cumbersome platforming to a minimum, and the fact that you can actually see where you're going enables good players to fly through the levels with grace and ease.

The 3D stages feature far more verticality than their 2D brethren, making for some truly breathtaking moments as Sonic powers down the side of a skyscraper or rides a rail straight down, the earth powering towards you at 8,000 miles per hour. In these moments, *Sonic Generations* sings, and it's difficult not to get a little giddy at the sheer entertainment these sections offer.

Overall, though, unless you're a hardcore *Sonic* fan there's a chance that you'll get bored long before you see everything that *Sonic*



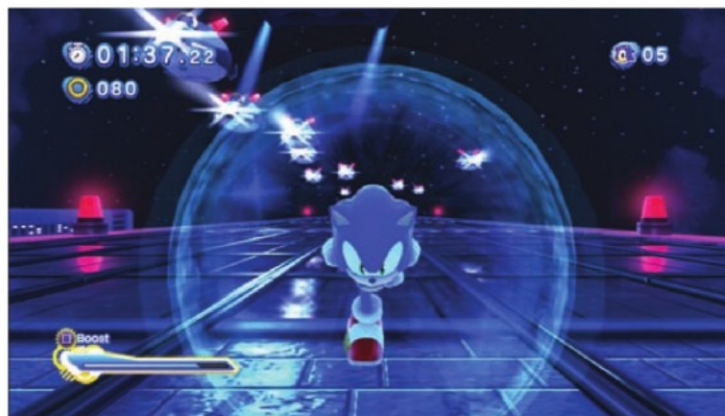
The cut-scenes that flesh out the story are filled with in-jokes for fans.



In this series



Sonic The Hedgehog Issue 151
The *Sonic* game that features bestiality. Yes. 55%



● Incredibly, the 3D sections are actually good.



HUB IT OUT

Sonic Generations hub world is great fan service

ALL CREDIT TO the designer who thought up *Sonic Generations*' hub world: it's both a great design mechanic as well as an excellent piece of fan service. In a similar manner to PS2 classic *Okami* the environment fills with colour as you liberate the stages, and the hub is filled with mini-games, extra characters, classic platforming, stores where you can upgrade Sonic and even a MegaDrive so you can play the original game. Superb.



Generations has to offer, which is a lot – as well as the stages there's a whole gaggle of mini-games to play featuring the supporting cast of Knuckles, Amy and so on, and each has a different gameplay mechanic. There's no doubting that when the game hits its stride it really is a superb piece of entertainment, but as in the game itself, you're more than likely to be stopped in your tracks by something that ruins your enjoyment of tearing up the game's wonderfully realised stages. Which, sadly, is how it's always been.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

By no means a bad game, *Sonic Generations* possesses the capacity to thrill even the staunchest hedgehog hater. It can't sustain itself for more than an hour or so, however, and extended play reveals that the old *Sonic* faults still haven't been ironed out.

70%



● The classic 2D levels are good if a little repetitive with extended play.





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The House Of The Dead: Overkill Extended Cut

Will the Wii port suffer like G did?



DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
Headstrong Games
Price
£29.99
Players
1-4
Genre
On-rails shooter
Age Rating
18
Website
www.sega.com/games/the-house-of-the-dead-overkill-extended-cut
Twitter
@sega
Facebook
facebook.com/Sega

PS3 It's deliciously ironic that of all genres, the on-rails shooter has by far the worst track record when it comes to its franchises going off the rails. *Time Crisis*, once the pinnacle of the lightgun-equipped accuracy test, got sillier and sillier until it was machine guns against giant robots rather than a quest for perfect headshots. *Point Blank*, always the genre's most ridiculous resident, lost its marbles and turned into a Nintendo DS game where you touched targets. And then there's *House Of The Dead* – the second game still stands up as one of the best lightgun games of all time but after the series lost its way for the rosey third and terrible fourth game, Sega relaunched the franchise on Wii. And how? By teaching it to swear, that's how.

Now looking a damn sight better than its 2009 Wii outing thanks to a surprisingly effective high-definition makeover, *The House Of The Dead: Overkill* is back and it's bigger, badder and ruder than before. It still doesn't look like a made-for-HD game but it's one of the more convincing impressions we've seen recently and oddly, this newfound graphical fidelity actually makes it a slightly better game. The Wii version's grainy visuals may



have worked in the grindhouse style but when it comes to spotting enemies, trinkets and hazards in the distance, HD clarity gives a definite edge.

The game itself sets up each level as a campy horror flick with a narrative running through the lot, though attitude is more important than story here. It's a land of foul-mouthed bad cops, gun-toting strippers and hordes of grisly 'mutants' (they're not zombies, okay?), and it's every bit as base and crude as that sounds. Constantly poking fun at movie clichés, other games and even itself, *Overkill* might have a one-joke routine but it still occasionally manages to pull out something priceless. Shoot The Sh*t mode – where you have to use your gun to censor the cut-scenes – is one such slice of amusing referential fun, though even some of the

coarse exchanges will be enough to set off anyone that has ever giggled at an episode of *South Park*.

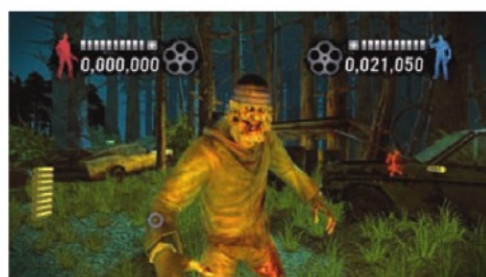
It's another lightgun shooter for PlayStation Move, then, and the usual rules apply – it's utterly pointless if you don't have Move, not really worth buying one for but a great excuse to dust off the bulb-tipped motion controller if you do have one kicking around. Between upgrading your weapons, messing around in mini-games, rounding up collectables and seeing the game through in the various modes (including Director's Cut mode with extra scenes and content in each chapter, for those that want the extended Extended Cut), there's tons to do. And, as long as you enjoy swearing and graphic violence, you'll most likely enjoy it. You *do* enjoy swearing and graphic violence, right?

Luke Albiges

VERDICT

A decent lightgun game and great PlayStation Move alternative for those that find much of the support for Sony's glowstick a little childish. Which, we can only assume, is pretty much everyone.

75%





DETAILS

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
In-house
Price
£24.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Fighting
Age Rating
12
Website
www.marvelvs
capcom3.com
Twitter
@marvelvscom
Facebook
facebook.com/
marvelvscom3

Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3

Trying to take you for a ride

PS3 In this world of constant waves of DLC, of character packs, additional levels and alternate costumes all costing a few (or more) quid, it's odd to see an update like *Ultimate MVC 3* released. On one hand we want to applaud Capcom for not falling into the trap of jamming content down our throats as soon as the original was released, but on the other, much bigger, much more sensible hand it has to be said it's a bit of a cheeky move.

True, the game – bringing with it 12 new characters, new backgrounds, music and all of the game-balancing nips and tweaks you won't understand until you've played it for 900 hours

– has been released at a budget price. But it's a question of worth – is it worth it for those who own the original *MVC 3*? No, to put it bluntly. It's just a bit too much of a stretch to charge £25 for a glorified character pack and tweaks that could be carried out via free patches. Even if the sheer intrigue Phoenix Wright brings with him as a playable character might overwhelm our better judgement.

For newcomers it's a different story, though – just like with *Super Street Fighter IV* you'll be getting the most fully featured ('ultimate', ho ho) version of the game for a knock-down price. If you're entering the realms of team-based



three-on-three combat for the first time, we would recommend starting with *UMVC 3*.

But if you're a newcomer you might need to know some details – the rest of you can sit quietly while we go over this. *UMVC 3* is a successful combination of sheer simplicity and mind-boggling complexity. Those not well-versed in the genre, put off by the likes of *Street Fighter* and *BlazBlue*, can jump right in here with recognisable characters and a simple game to play. In fact, an addition to the game even encourages button mashing, so there's that. But at the same time there's more than enough to keep newcomers hooked and learning new things, as well as enough to keep the genre stalwarts happy.

So there you have it – the number at the end is lower as it's difficult to say £25 for glorified DLC is a good thing. But a budget price and the fact it's a damn good fighting game means it's hard to do anything other than recommend *Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3* to newcomers.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

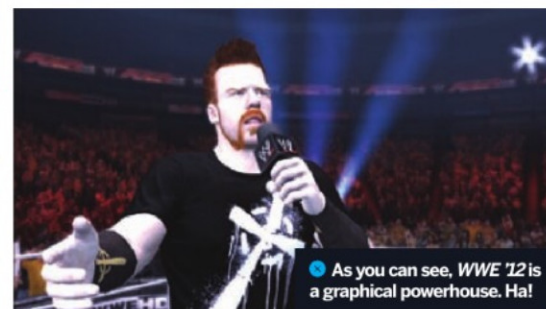
It's the best, most complete version of *MVC 3* to date. It's also something that could, and should, have been achieved via DLC alone. £25 is a good entry point for newcomers, but a massive stumbling point for owners of the previous iteration.

78%





Playing with a group of friends can still be a lot of fun.



As you can see, WWE '12 is a graphical powerhouse. Ha!



As ever, character creation is by far the most entertaining part of the package.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

WWE '12

The name has changed, but not a lot else

PS3

Another year, another exercise in abject mediocrity, another cry for the series to change developer or have a year off, another year of said request being utterly ignored as marketing bigwigs turn a blind eye to critical feedback in the endless pursuit for the mighty dollar. Another Yuke's WWE game.

Every year the developer and THQ promise change, and every year we nod our heads and say, 'yeah, right'. It's no different here. Despite the developer making all of the right noises about changing the aged franchise's treacle-slow formula – some guff about 'rebuilding from the ground up' – this is still the *SmackDown* series in all but name, with a lot of the same problems, and no moniker change can disguise that.

Granted, some work has been done. The traditionally shonky transitions between animations are better, bar the occasional



DETAILS

Publisher

THQ

Developer

Yuke's

Price

£49.99

Players

1-6

Genre

Sports

Age Rating

16

Website

www.thq.com

Twitter

@WWEgames

Facebook

facebook.com/THQInsider



clipping problems, and the new rope physics add a surprising amount to the action. Sadly, it's still the same old WWE game underneath, with poor AI – John Cena's pathfinding failing to get him from the ring to the Titantron in the first challenge of *Road To WrestleMania* mode

Another year, another exercise in abject mediocrity, another Yuke's WWE Game

being a case in point – and slow, laborious gameplay. Speaking of which, this year Yuke's 'streamlined' the move system, attempting to bring a sense of momentum by making wrestlers start with low-impact moves and then as the fighters weaken progress to high-impact ones. All it means in actuality is that matches shuffle to a conclusion with the grace and impact of a Brock Lesnar moonsault. There's a new limb-targeting system for 'working' opponents, but when these moves are laid over wooden animations it doesn't help much.

So far, so predictable. What makes the whole shebang so infuriating is that at times WWE '12 shows that it can still provide a good game of wrestling, and played with mates this

can still be an enjoyable experience. Outside of the ring, *Road To WrestleMania* is better than before and the character and story creation elements are a lot of fun to mess around with. Yuke's obviously cares about WWE, but does it have the time to actually create something new? No, because *there must be a new WWE game every year or whatever will our financial department do?* Unless you desperately need a 'new' WWE experience, then we suggest you go and buy 2003's *Here Comes The Pain*. Which was another Yuke's WWE game before that was a negative thing to say.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Die-hard WWE fans might find something to love here, but everyone else will be far less enamoured with another minuscule change in direction for a stalled series. It's too harsh to say that WWE '12 is a terrible game.

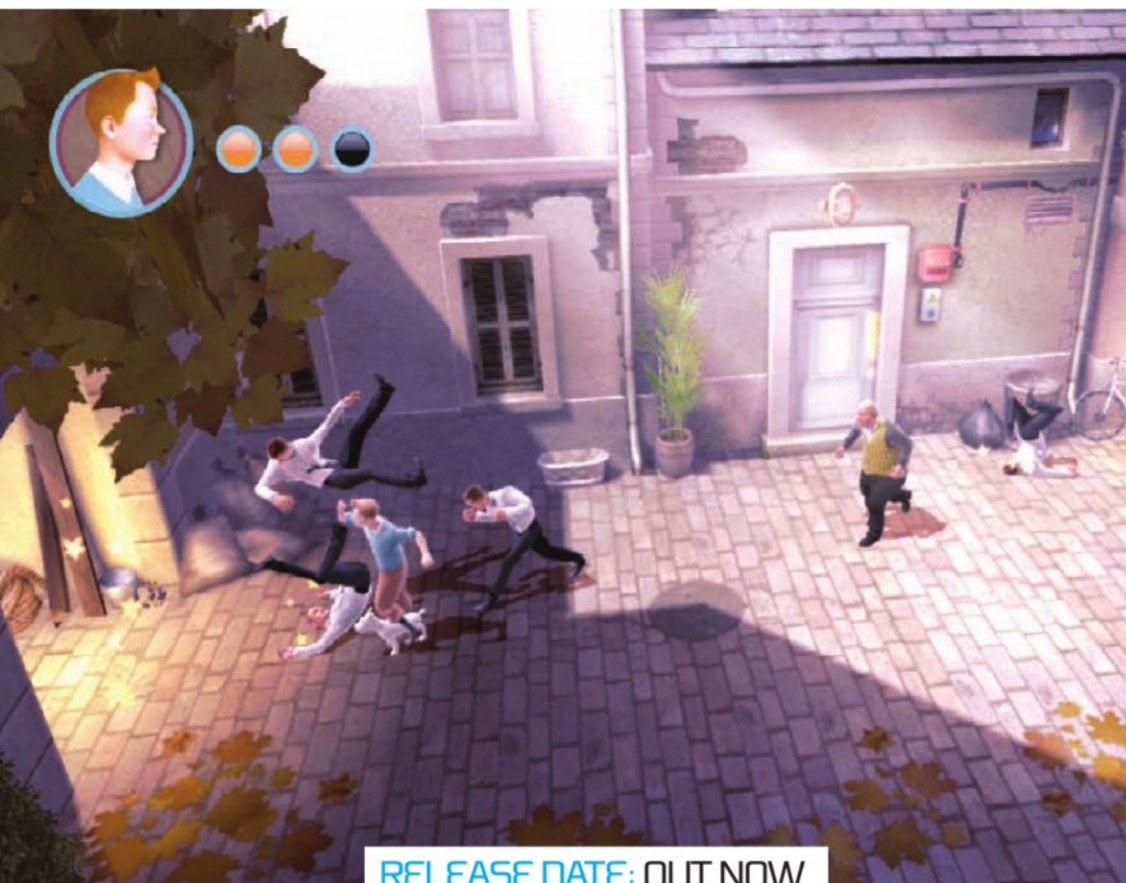
What it is, however, is a flatly mediocre representation of the 'sport'.

50%

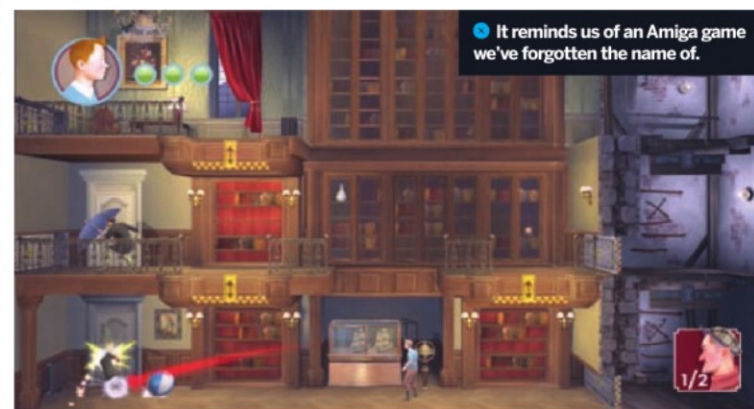




▶ The Adventures Of Tintin: The Secret Of The Unicorn



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



It reminds us of an Amiga game we've forgotten the name of.



DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
Ubisoft Montpellier
Price
£49.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Platformer
Age Rating
12
Website
tintin-thegame.com
Twitter
@Ubisoft
Facebook
on.fb.me/qTjJKO

The Adventures Of Tintin: The Secret Of The Unicorn

aka Hergé's adventures in utter boredom



If you were a watcher of the cartoon version of Hergé's *Adventures Of Tintin* back in the day, you'll be well aware it was rather a bland affair. If you were a reader of the comics, you'll be aware it was dull with a slight hint of 'of its time' racism. It should come as no surprise then that this game of the Spielberg/Jackson film is, to put it lightly, capable of reducing even the most enthusiastic, energetic gamer to the lowest depths of a waking coma.

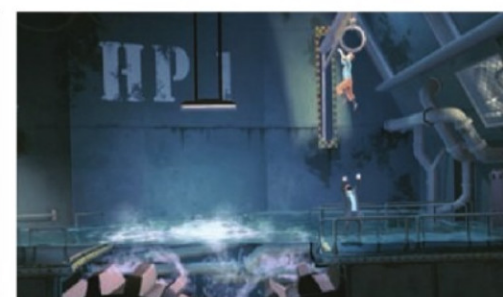
It plays out as about 75 per cent platformer, with the titular ginger-quiffed boy-reporter, accompanied by Captain Haddock and his dog Snowy, navigating the world. There are fights, basic puzzles to work through and – initially at least – it's inoffensive and better than we expected.



Then you repeat it. Then you repeat it again. Then it's mixed up with some flying, or swimming, or lobbing grappling hooks at windows. Then those bits are repeated. And repeated. And repeated. And if you get this far, you're lucky if you're still awake.

Mechanically it's sound, with only a few basic issues that stick out – combat, for example, can be a bit unwieldy at times. But what do you expect when you're getting a boy with stupid hair to punch a man lobbing landmines? Still, jumping is crisp and responsive and there were few times we felt like the game was cheating us out of anything. Though that's also down to the fact it's very, very easy.

This factor could come down to the game being aimed at a younger audience, but we're going to go with the PEGI rating on the front of the box: a 12. 12 year olds are better at games than *The Secret Of The Unicorn* makes them out to be. That much we know by virtue of having been 12 and having had friends who



were good at games, just like us. It's quite patronisingly easy, as much as it is boring.

But there's no denying there's some entertainment to be had, and *Tintin* fans will – shock of all shocks – get some fun out of it. The rest of us will be too busy being fed through a tube and experiencing bizarre, dream-like sensations as we happily coma away for the next few months. THANKS FOR THE COMA, *TINTIN*.

(Disclaimer: *Tintin* did not put us in a coma. It is just very dull.)

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Not bad enough to be sent for instant, ruthless execution – but certainly not good enough to really bother with. Fans of the bequipped ginge might get some delight from it; the rest of us will end up in a boredom-induced coma.

58%



These bits are... well, they're made for Xbox 360's Kinect, let's be honest.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Rayman Origins

Breaking the mould

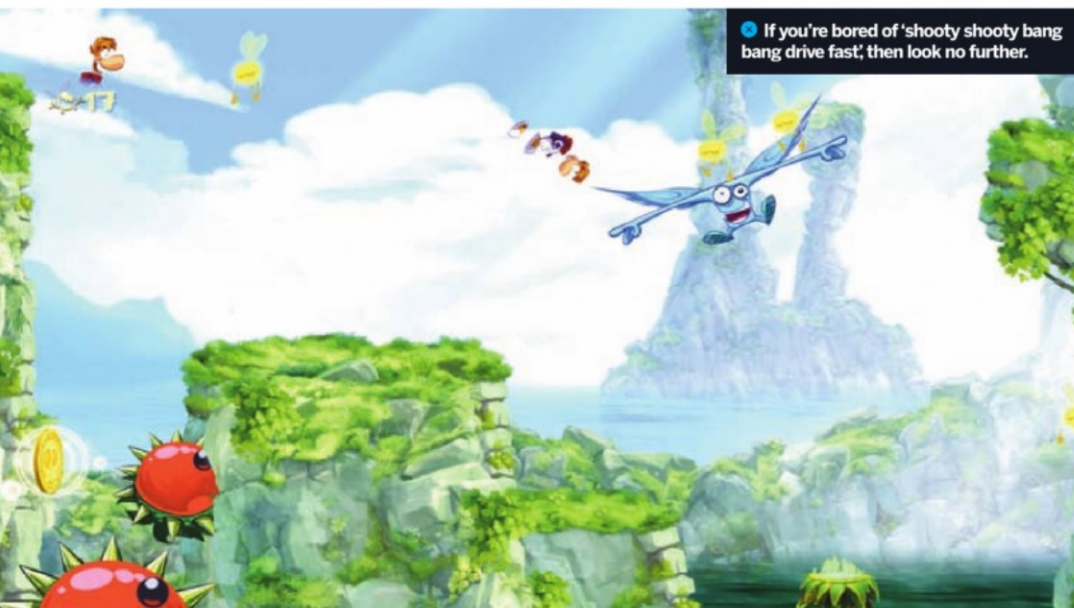
PS3 Remember platforming games? They're the ones you used to play before shooting people in the face became a national pastime. They're the childish, simple, unserious, collect-a-thons that your ten-year-old self would've spent hours glued to. But not now, though. Now you're a serious gamer and need to think about proper things like character, narrative and which massive gun you're going to use to shoot yet another alien/soldier/bystander with. Do you remember how games used to be? Happy music, loveable characters... colour? It was such an easy way to spend a few hours. Whatever happened to happiness?

Well, it's still here, and from the look of Ubisoft's latest, you should have already gathered that *Rayman Origins* is a return to the platforming sensibilities that secured the genre's dominance 15 years ago. They're joys

that no gamer should ever forget and *Rayman* manages to recapture the sheer sense of fun that many of our more modern experiences overlook in favour of the baser instincts. *Origins* can't fail to put a smile on your face, and keep it there, as its glorious world bounces past you in a blur of jaunty tunes and bright colours.

It's a traditional setup, though, that sticks rigidly to platforming lore as established by Nintendo and its plumber. A map with different worlds is presented, with plenty of opportunity for extensive use of the genre's staples – green levels, snow levels, lava levels and pretty much every location you'd expect. Though it'd be easy to criticise *Rayman Origins* for not really thinking outside the box, it's what it manages to do inside the box that makes it such a compelling experience. This is one fun box.

Levels are unique in flavour but, ultimately, begin to feel predictable, with hidden areas and familiar jumps repeated across the worlds. Rayman and his friends have a steady progression of abilities and there's always something new to see, but it's nothing you won't have seen before. The act of jumping and movement sits just on the right side of accurate and you'll never feel too shortchanged by a death, even if you could argue that there are perhaps a few too many moves.



• If you're bored of 'shooty shooty bang drive fast', then look no further.

Or you could try



Rayman Issue 1
Solid platforming that's marred by a number of issues that drag it down. **76%**



• It's so pretty, like playing a Ren & Stimpy cartoon – brilliant.



• It's okay, you can laugh, you're allowed to have fun now.



DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
In-house
Price
£49.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Platformer
Age Rating
7

Website
raymanorigins.uk.ubi.com
Twitter
[@RaymanGame](https://twitter.com/RaymanGame)
Facebook
facebook.com/rayman



Where *Rayman Origins* really succeeds, though – and it does this to utter perfection – is with its gorgeous design, hilarious gameplay and joy-inducing musical score. There's a level of polish here that platformers haven't seen in many years and few modern games give you free rein to have this much fun and not feel guilty about it.

David Lynch

VERDICT

Taking us back to a time and a place when platformers were the games of choice, Ubisoft's *Rayman Origins* offers gamers everything that's missing in many modern games – great music, loveable characters, colour and, most importantly, fun.

80%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Spider-Man: Edge Of Time

Out of time more like



Publisher Activision Developer Beenox
Price £44.99 Players 1 Genre Action adventure Age Rating 12
Website www.herohq.com/spidermanedgeoftime/
Twitter @BeenoxTeam Facebook facebook.com/heroHQ



You've got to hand it to Activision: it's got some real balls if *Spider-Man: Edge Of Time* is anything to go by. After all, only

a publisher so gloriously confident in itself could release a superhero game so monumentally boring in such close proximity to the brilliant *Batman: Arkham City*. Even if *Arkham City* hadn't adjusted everyone's expectations *Edge Of Time* would still be an underwhelming experience.

The central conceit is interesting enough – the 'current' Spidey and his 2099 incarnation get involved in a series of japes that influence each other's timelines – but everything else is so pedestrian that it hurts. Fighting is mediocre, the actual time-altering stuff is weak and contrived and your objectives seemingly revolve around always finding a key for a door. Which you acquire by beating someone up. Every time.

To top things off *Edge Of Time* also features what could be the most aggravating opening in videogame history, demanding you hold up on the left stick to crawl through a series of vents for about ten minutes while the game spews out infuriating expositional nonsense. Put it this way: three days after this came out, Activision announced the next *Spider-Man* game, which must mean that it has the utmost faith in it. Or the opposite; that it just doesn't give a swinging spider.

Steve Burns

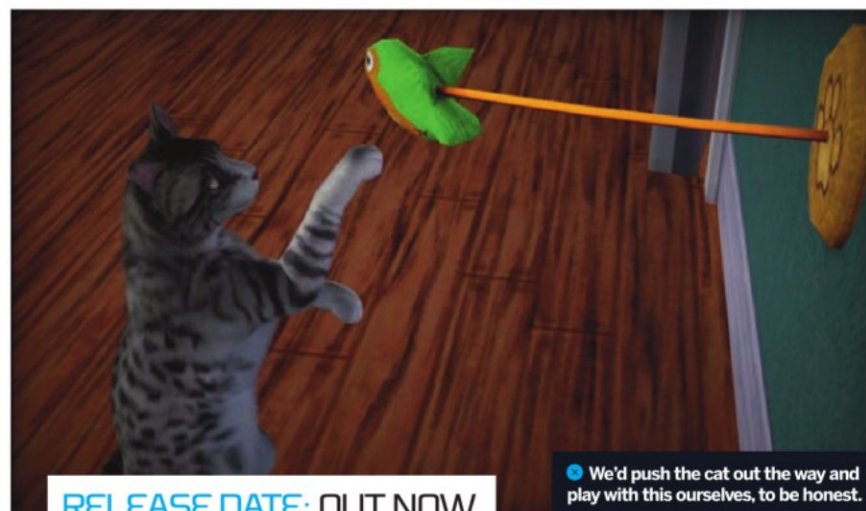
VERDICT

Not offensively bad, just uninspired and lazy in every way. The web swinging's good, we'll give it that, but when the game around it isn't as enjoyable as *Spider-Man 2* for PS2 then you know that this isn't worth your time nor money.

38%



• Magic Dust keeps the kittens quiet!



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

• We'd push the cat out the way and play with this ourselves, to be honest.

The Sims 3: Pets

It's raining cats and dogs



Publisher EA Developer EA
Price £29.99 Players 1 Genre Sim Age Rating 12 Website thesims3.com/pets Twitter @TheSims3 Facebook facebook.com/thesims3uk

Play's responsibilities in life tend not to reach very far. Stumble

office-wards in the morning (ideally fully clothed), type words, stumble home-wards in the evening (still fully clothed in a best-case scenario), then sleep. This explains why playing *The Sims 3: Pets* was such a disaster. Looking after a baby and a puppy proved too much when the baby pooped himself. We tried to change the nappy, failed, panic set in and the PlayStation 3 was switched off in terror. Form a queue, ladies.

Not that this is new territory for *The Sims 3* veterans, or anyone who is slightly more competent at life than *Play*. The formula is the same as it's always been – you raise a virtual household, get a job, cook dinner, wash yourself, live life. You have aspirations to aspire to, friends to be friendly with and enemies to... enmity. At. It's a life-management game that threatens to be fiddly but stays the right side of accessible, smothering the sliders and options behind approachable menus.

For *Sims* veterans, it's the addition of pets here that are the draw. It's not a huge difference to *Sims 3* apart from the added 'awww' factor and more poo



to deal with. You might not be fighting Chimera, searching for treasure with Nathan Drake or fighting *Skyrim*'s dragons but no other PS3 game offers the sheer terror of dealing with baby poo while trying not to set yourself on fire. Survival horror? You best believe it.

Ryan King

VERDICT

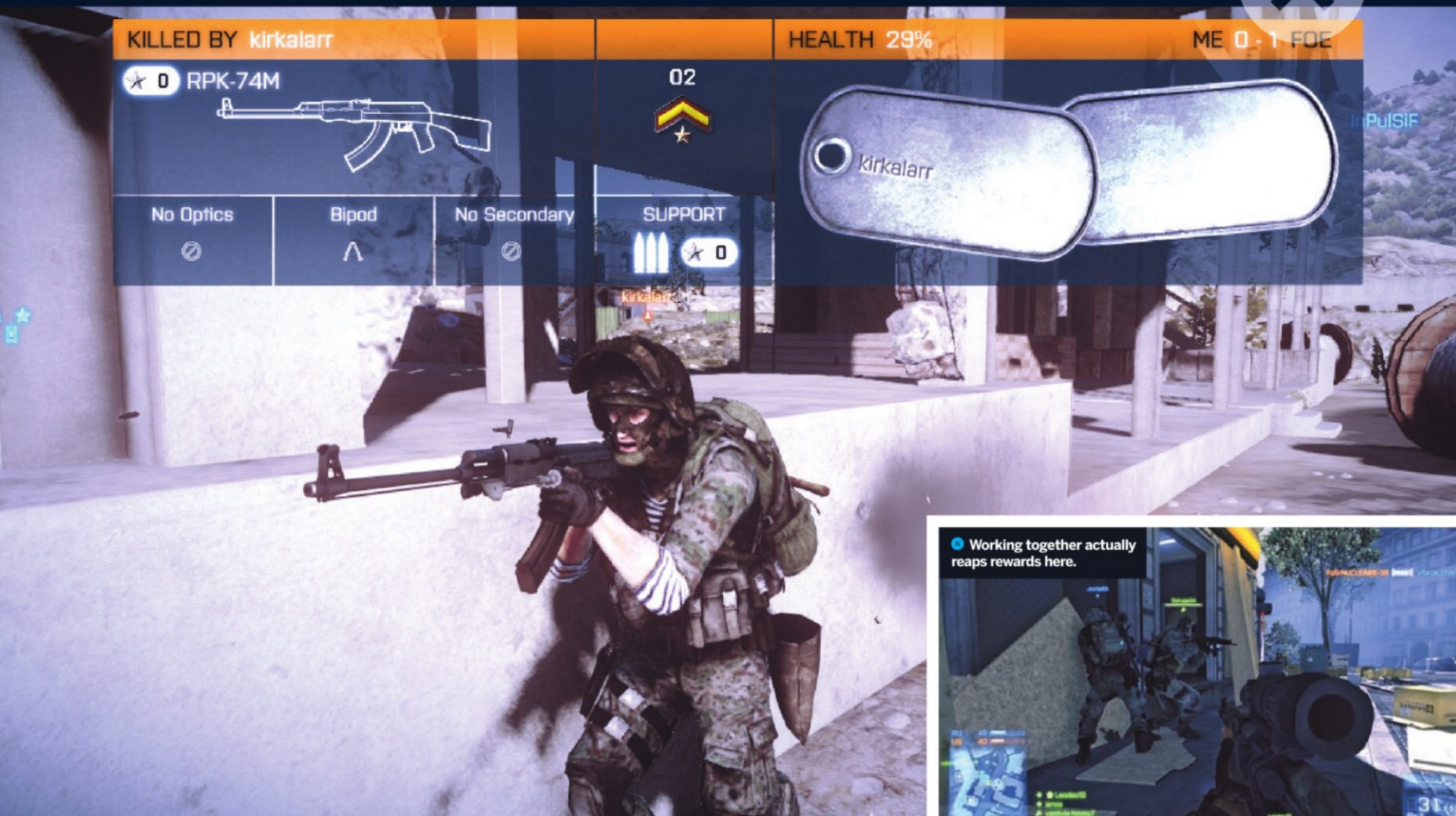
It's a copout saying you already know if you want this or not but honestly, you already know if you want this or not. It's moreish, even if it doesn't scratch the deepest of gaming itches.

70%

Play Network

プレーバック

Online reviews, Store downloads and more



Battlefield 3

The Only Way To Play: a bit more about it

DETAILS

Publisher
EA
Developer
DICE
Release date
Out now
Price
£49.99
Players
1-24
Genre
FPS

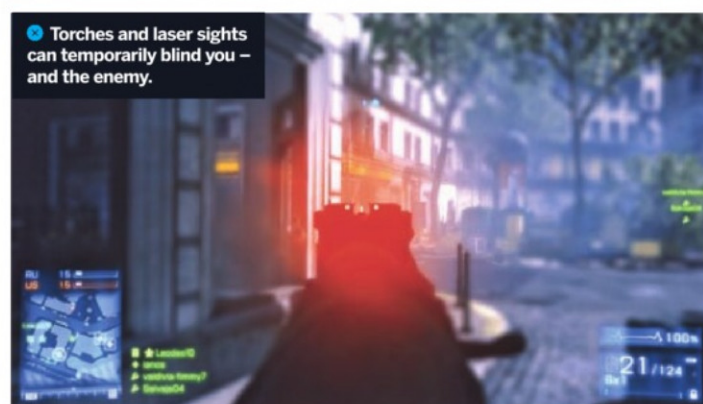
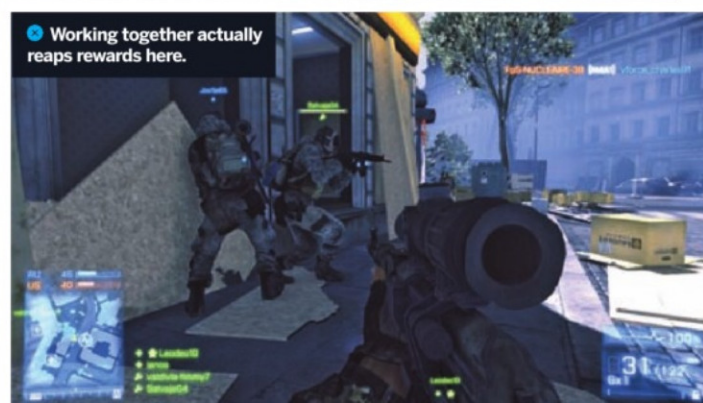
IT'S FAIR TO say there's more to *Battlefield 3*'s online mode than we went over in our review on page 84, so we've decided to offer you a few more details on what you can expect from the game. Aside from an exceptional experience, of course.

Aside from the already-established modes like Rush and Conquest – still brilliant, obviously – *Battlefield 3* sees the return of Team Deathmatch, not seen since *Battlefield 1942*. It probably should have stayed forgotten as it isn't the best mode to showcase what the series is all about. Objective-based modes with a focus on rewarding team play is where the game shines, and while TD isn't terrible by a long shot it clearly isn't the best way to play.

Maps-wise it's a good mix of open expanses like Damavand Peak and more compact, twitch-favouring affairs like Operation Metro. It's clear the compact maps are a bit out of DICE's comfort zone and – again – they're not bad, they're just nowhere near as good as the majestic, open expanses can be.

On a more personal level you'll see the ability to customise your soldier and dog tags – it's perfunctory, but a welcome addition to the series. The ability to muck about with your weapon setup is a *Battlefield* staple, and the steady trickle of unlocks will keep you coming back for more and more. It also encourages you to mix up how you actually play, in order to get a spread of new toys – though if you've played *Battlefield* before you already knew that.

We did find lag to be an issue during one session of play, but this is as likely down to a poor Wi-Fi connection as it is the game itself – especially as we saw no such problems at any other time. The reliability of matchmaking, however, was sometimes something that could be brought into question. Granted, it was probably one out of 20 occasions, but games would mysteriously be lost, or hang on loading.



There is sure to be some balancing in future patches, but it looks like the extensive beta DICE ran earlier in the year did a fine job of honing *Battlefield 3* to a fine state. This is the best in the *Battlefield* series so far, and arguably the best online game on PlayStation 3 – depending on how much you like *Modern Warfare 3*.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Battlefield 3's single-player may have been below par but DICE has used all its expertise to create one of the best online experiences available. Fans of the series and online FPSs in general will not be disappointed.

★★★★★



Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3

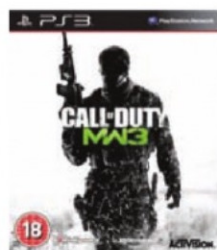
Everything old made new again

IF YOU'VE READ our review of *Modern Warfare 3* (starting on page 72) then you'll know that we're relieved that the campaign has more in common with the original than *Modern Warfare 2*. Anyone that's played *MW2*'s multiplayer will be pleased to hear that a similar situation exists within multiplayer.

First of all, stacking killstreaks are on the scrapheap where they belong, which means players can't just camp for a low-level strike and watch it stack all the way up to something absolutely ridiculous like, say, the nuke. Good riddance. Speaking of which, said nuke is gone, replaced with, erm, attack dogs. Oh well, you can't have it all.

Making up for that, however, is the new Support Strike Package. Tired of being killed before you get a streak going? Switch to this and your killstreak won't reset when you die. The flipside is that the rewards aren't quite as strong, being more defensive-minded and all that, but as we said, you can't have it all.

What you can have is a bucketload of good-to-fantastic multiplayer maps, some of which recall the series' best. Interchange, for example,



DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Infinity Ward/
Sledgehammer/
Raven
Release date
Out now
Price
£54.99
Players
1-16
Genre
FPS

with its large intersecting road brings to mind *Call Of Duty 4*'s Ambush and also recalls a mashup of both Crash and Crossroads. In truth, of the 16 in the box there are few duffers here, and maps like Arkaden (a German mall), which is perfect for most gametypes, will soon become an instant favourite.

As will Outpost and Dome, maps that are large and small respectively and are filled with clever flanking routes and dangerous open spaces to cross. It might sound lazy on the developer's part to say these maps easily recall earlier ones, but the opposite is true: after years of refinement, what works and what doesn't is very much apparent, and that's reflected here.

As for the weapons and perks some old favourites are gone, some have returned, and some have been remixed into other weapons. *COD 4* snipers who also liked to run-'n'-gun will be pleased that the M14 is back via the MK14 (and excellent it is, too, for those who don't spray and pray), and the Desert Eagle also makes an appearance. The FAMAS is out, but those who loved it (and its three-round

burst) can simply use the Type 95 instead. They even practically look the same.

Perks-wise the terrible One-Man Army has been scrapped, but there's one new addition that is perfect for those who actually like to look down their gun's sights: Stalker, which enables you to move much faster when ADS.

At the moment we can't be sure which perks or weapons seem massively broken, and we could go on forever about what everything means. The bottom line, however, is that this is still a fantastic piece of online gaming: the most accessible, the most immediately engaging, and one of the most rewarding. It hasn't changed that much, but what's here is still excellent.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

It might be familiar, but there's nothing inherently wrong with that. Much better than *MW2* and maybe just nudging out *Black Ops*, *Modern Warfare 3* is another high point for the series. Until people get their hands on it and start ruining it of course, but hey.

★★★★★

Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair

Classic platformer heads online, allowing teams of six to take on the demonic hordes

NOW THIS IS a strange one. Having played every incarnation of *Castlevania* imaginable, this conjured up very mixed feelings at first. Essentially it's the classic *Castlevania* experience blown wide open for up to six players to team up online. But there are plenty of twists in that your character starts off ill-prepared to combat the demonic hordes that attack you from the first room, but prolonged playing of the same map bestows you with better tools to progress.

And with so many people working their way through the maps, it is a shock that virtually all of the maps are visible on screen at any one time, reducing your playing window to squint-to-see proportions. A huge TV and some prolonged play see you through this initial hurdle, but then comes the problem of actually finding people to play it.

Like the recent PSN release of *Spelunker*, online activity is limited. Unless you can persuade your friends to stump up you'll have to play on your own. As a solo experience,

Harmony Of Despair is a soulless trudge of misery that feels too far detached from the high peaks of *Symphony Of The Night*.

Released last year on Xbox Live, it was criticised for being too small, with only six maps to conquer, but Konami has addressed this and included the additional map pack and extra characters from *Castlevania*'s long lineage. Commendation should also be awarded for some cool features, like Survival mode, whereby players compete against each other to be the ultimate slayer and online leaderboards in which the best players can trade ghost data to show off their prowess. But die-hard fans shouldn't feel like they're missing out on much by bypassing this spin-off.

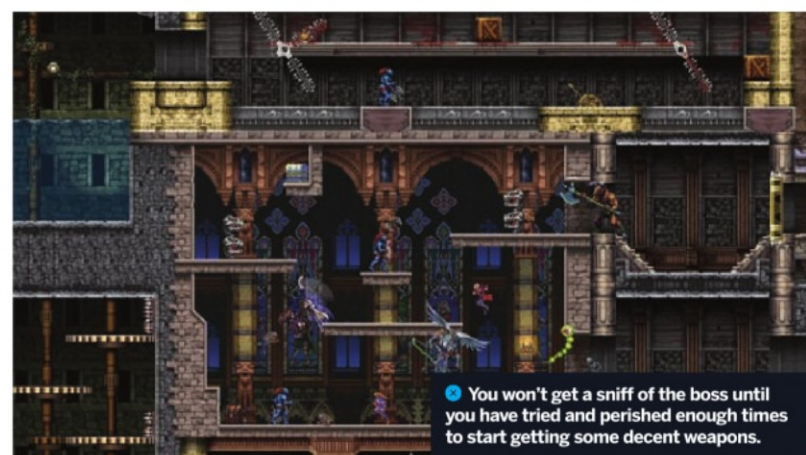
VERDICT

A commendable departure from the well-beaten track, but ultimately it's only as good as the number of online players you have to team up with... which ain't many.

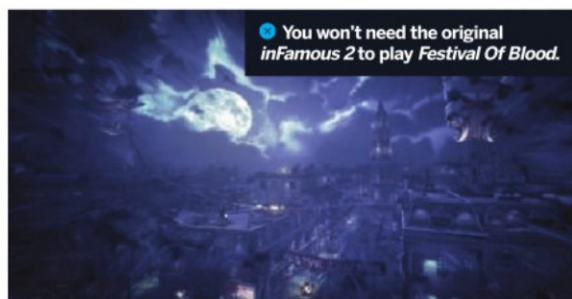
67%

DETAILS

Publisher
Konami
Developer
In-house
Release Date
Out now
Price
£11.99
Players
1-16
Genre
Platformer
Website
www.konami.co.uk
Twitter
@Konami
Facebook
facebook.com/
CastlevaniaHD



You won't get a sniff of the boss until you have tried and perished enough times to start getting some decent weapons.



You won't need the original *inFamous 2* to play *Festival Of Blood*.

inFamous: Festival Of Blood

"Tonight I'm going to suck! Your blood"

DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
Sucker Punch Productions
Release Date
Out now
Price
£7.99
Players
1
Genre
Sandbox
Website
infamous
thegame.com
Twitter
@INFAMOUS
Facebook
www.facebook.com/
suckerpunch
productions

COLE MACGRATH HAS just eight hours to kill Bloody Mary – the vampire who caused so many problems in New Marais hundreds of years ago – otherwise he'll succumb to her will and forever be her slave. Fortunately, it only takes about three hours to get through all of this standalone DLC spin-off of *inFamous 2*. That leaves five hours to, what – glide? Yeah, gliding's fun.

It won't take long to blitz through the handful of main missions, but you can spend time messing about with user-created missions and a few side attractions. Also the game opens up again once the end credits have rolled so there's impetus to go and earn all your lovely Trophies. Either way, there's at least three hours of entertainment here and a few more for those who really can be bothered to electrically float around the parts of the city that are open.

Playing as Vampire Cole is quite the fun experience – his new power of flight is both useful and pretty natty, and going around sucking the blood of unsuspecting bystanders is just plain funny. If you're evil, that is. It's odd, but they don't feel out of place either, and

playing as a superhero/villain vampire isn't something we get to do enough of in games.

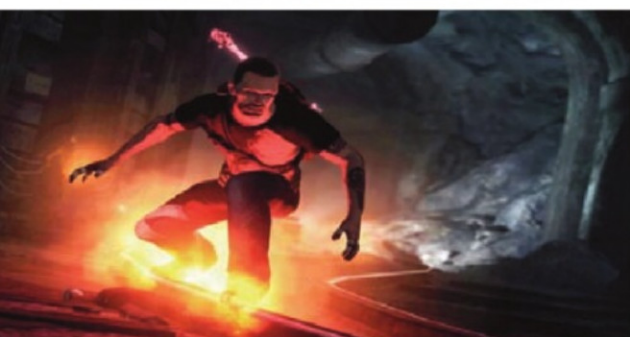
Other than that it's *inFamous 2* with a few upgrades, such as Move controls and a few new lightning-based moves. There are no huge changes, but we actually didn't expect as many new bits and bobs to be thrown in as there have been. It's almost spoiling us, what with this being a mere batch of DLC. But yes, it is still the *inFamous* we all know and love (if only a bit). In other words: it's fun, but rough around the edges. *Festival Of Blood* is a welcome, albeit brief, addition to Cole and Zeke's adventures. Best of all, you don't need the original to play it.

Is it worthwhile as DLC? Absolutely. Is it worth a penny shy of eight quid? We'd go with yes. It's well-crafted, tells a nice, fun side story and adds enough elements to make things interesting even for veterans. Recommended, if imperfect and short.

VERDICT

More of the usual *inFamous 2* pros alongside more of the usual *inFamous 2* cons.

76%



On top of his regular powers Cole is now able to fly, too.



DETAILS

Publisher
Ratloop Asia
Developer
In-house
Release Date
Out now
Price
£8.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Shoot-'em-up
Website
www.
rocketbirds.
com/hardboiled
chicken
Twitter
@Ratloop
Facebook
facebook.com/
Rocketbirds.
Hardboiled.
Chicken

Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken

P-p-p-pick off a penguin – or 5,000 – in this tooled-up poultry platformer

THIS INTRIGUING TITLE is an expansion of a web-based Flash game called *Rocketbirds: Revolution* and it is essentially a 2D, side-scrolling platformer in the *Abe's Oddysee* mould, but with loads more guns and gore.

Set in a place called Albatropolis, a land populated by birds that has been invaded by penguins, you – as Hardboiled Chicken – must shoot and solve your way through 15 levels en route to assassinating the penguin leader. Gameplay starts off basic with a couple of stages of relatively simple running-'n'-gunning, then you're tossed the curveball of an *Asteroids*-style flying stage before the game seems to begin proper as Hardboiled gets incarcerated in a Colditz-esque POW camp and must find a way to spring himself and his fellow inmates. It is at this point that the layout of the levels starts to get ever more labyrinthine and an increasing amount of brain power is required to work out what you have to do and the order in which you have to carry it out in. Around this time you're introduced

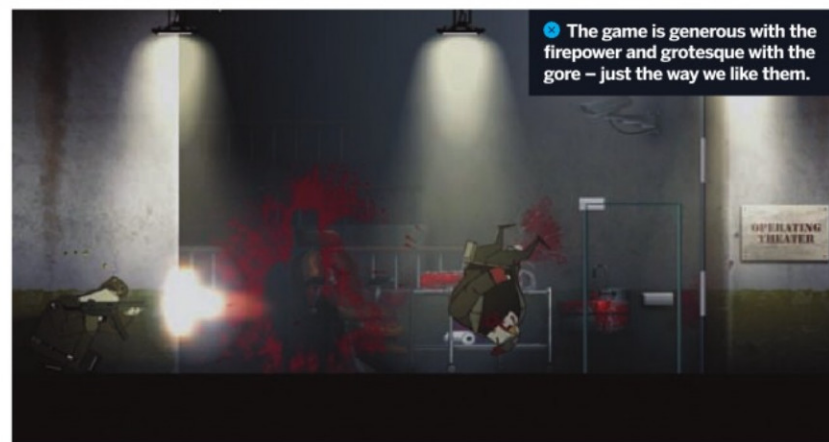
to 'Brain Bugs', which you can lob to explode near unsuspected penguins, who will then get brain-bummed into acting as your drones, so that you can use them to open doors and flambé their colleagues on your behalf.

The game is stylishly executed, with sharp comic book-style graphics and good-humoured cartoon movies to help along the narrative, it is also complemented by a great soundtrack and, for all you Trophy whores out there, its own Platinum Trophy reward (which appears quite easy to earn). So is this action adventure worth the money? Too cluckin' right, especially as it also boasts ten additional co-op chapters.

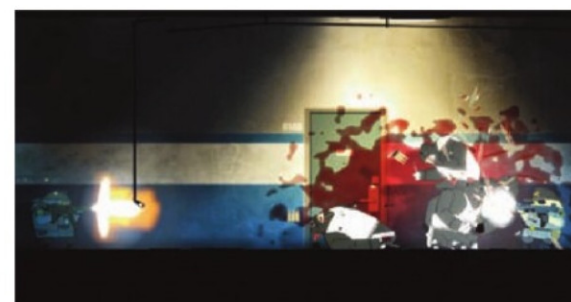
VERDICT

Instantly likeable, this old-school-style platform shooter is very well executed and an absolute bargain for the bang you get for your cluck.

82%



The game is generous with the firepower and grotesque with the gore – just the way we like them.



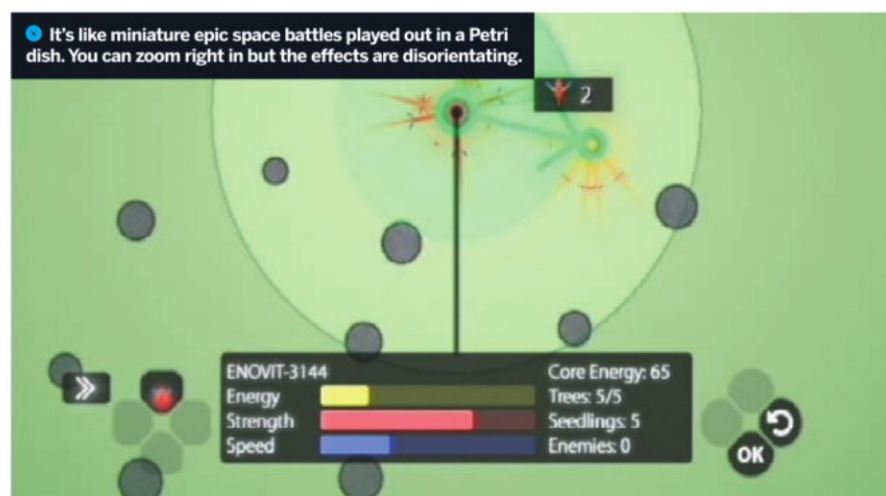
DETAILS

Publisher
EA
Developer
In-house
Release Date
Out now
Price
£12.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Sports
Website
www.ea.com/uk/
nba-jam-on-fire-
edition
Twitter
@ea
Facebook
facebook.com/
NBAJAM

NBA Jam: On Fire Edition

WE'RE OLD ENOUGH to remember when *NBA Jam* was cutting edge, when we were happy playing the simplest form of basketball in endless time-sucking battles of end-to-end sneaker squeaking and slam-dunkery. But these days, the big heads and shallow gameplay don't really get us excited. To be fair, EA has had a good crack at trying to make it appeal to impulsive, Friday night gamers with a few quid burning a hole in their PSN store credit. JAM Arena and Road Trip are decent additions in which you can team up with friends to take on the world, but, aside from some ramped-up AI, there isn't much depth here to differentiate one match from another.

64%



It's like miniature epic space battles played out in a Petri dish. You can zoom right in but the effects are disorientating.

DETAILS

Publisher
Omni Systems Ltd
Developer
In-house
Release Date
Out now
Price
£7.99
Players
1
Genre
Strategy
Website
www.eufhoria-
game.com
Twitter
@RudolfKremers
Facebook
facebook.com/
EufhoriaGame

Eufhoria

THIS INDIE TITLE from Rudolf Kremers and Alex May, collectively known as Omni Systems Ltd, gathered a cult following as a finalist at the 2009 Independent Games Festival – when it was known as *Dyson*. But after some gameplay enhancements and a change of name *Eufhoria* is upon us.

It's one of those artier titles, like *Flower*, that make you proclaim 'WTF?' when you first play it, but some simple gameplay, pastel graphics and ambient sound effects make it a strangely hypnotic game in which you have to grow seeds and deploy them to neighbouring satellite planets to conquer 'dark' seeds that already inhabit the other worlds and grow trees with which to spawn more seeds and slowly take over the universe. It shouldn't work, but it's most certainly a triumph.

85%



RETRO ON PSN... They're old but are they any good?



Fighting Force

- Release date November 1997 • Publisher Eidos • Developer Core Design
- Games it influenced Fighting Force 2



OH DEARY ME Square Enix. What are you doing? What is this? *Fighting Force* wasn't any good when it came out, way back in the mists of 1997, and it's even

worse now. And yet you ask that people to pay real money for this? Four pounds sterling? Mental, and a little shameless to boot.

Still, there are no doubt going to be a fair number of nostalgia-addled dunces that will pick this up to remind themselves of the Good Old Days, and to that we say: throw yourselves into an industrial threshing machine. It'll be a better decision than buying this, anyway. Because *Fighting Force* is absolute toilet.

For those of you who don't know what *Fighting Force* is, here's the rundown: players choose between four standard scrolling beat-'em-up characters, each of which will be instantly recognisable to anyone who's played a game from the genre – there's the floppy

of roadsigns was considered Totally Awesome. In 2011, however, such old-school trickery can't disguise the fact that *Fighting Force* just isn't any fun to play. Which, as you may have guessed, Is A Problem.

You walk. You punch (sometimes you even kick). You pick up a steel pipe and lay black-suited villain number 1,449,238,485 out. You kick over a bin. It has a medipack in it, as opposed to a chicken, which makes us sad. Repeat to fade.

Granted, *Streets Of Rage*, *Final Fight* and so on all followed this template, and they were excellent games. So why are we hating on *Fighting Force* when those games are considered classics? Because those games had excellent gameplay, fool. Stuff like combos and that. Good graphics, varied locations and, especially in the case of *Streets Of Rage*, music so good that if Mozart was reborn as a videogame musician *Streets Of Rage* would have been his masterpiece.

Fighting Force has none of this. The 3D graphics of the time make the moves appear slow, and the

Fighting Force attempts to mix up the walk-punch-walk template a little bit. Or at least it did in 1997

haired all-rounder, the massive hulk of a man, and the lithe and underdressed female (two in this instance).

In keeping with tradition they each have stupid names, like Hawk, Smasher, Blaze and Soviet Iron Fister (only one of these is made up). After choosing your character it's off to the mean streets of Somewhere Town to smash everybody's faces in as you attempt to bring down the evil Zeng corporation.

To its credit, *Fighting Force* attempts to mix up the walk-punch-walk template a little bit. Or at least it did in 1997, when yanking poles out

character models have so many angles that they look like the first successful gene-splicing of man and octagon. Being a PSone game, we can forgive the fact it doesn't look great. But when there's nothing else redeeming the game it only compounds the problem.

Chuck in the absolutely criminal loading times and it's hard to see why Square Enix expects anyone to pay real, actual money for this.

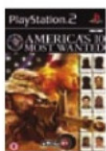
WHAT WE SAID: Issue 27 • 89%

Shamefully, some fool gave this 89% way back in the day. They have been dealt with.

NEVER COMING TO PSN #1



America's 10 Most Wanted



- Release date 2005
- Developer Black Ops Entertainment

ENCOMPASSING MANY OF the reasons why a large portion of the world aren't the biggest fans of the good ol' US of A, *10 Most Wanted* is one of the most embarrassing games ever to have been created. As you can probably tell by the title, your mission in this absolute nonsense is to capture the enemies of America, including Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden. You do this by waiting patiently for years on end for the slightest shred of intel on their whereabouts before finally getting your man after decades of bloody violence.

Nah, only joking: you just fistfight them to pieces after shooting your way through thousands of people. While wearing sunglasses.

It's difficult to put into words how poor this is, but we'll try with the following ridiculous tale of the game's production: with the real Saddam actually getting captured just before the game came out, the dev team hurriedly changed the opening, claiming that the man caught (and subsequently hanged) was an 'imposter', and that you now have to go out and find the real guy.



WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT...

The Getaway

LAUDED IN THE run-up to release as being some kind of *GTA*-beater, *The Getaway* ended up being a phenomenally underwhelming title that was closer to *EastEnders* than *GTA* in plot and action.

Sure, the approximation of London was impressive, and for the time the graphics were quite something, but none of that matters when the main character handles like a drunken speedboat, the dialogue sounds like it's been written by randomly reassembling words from Guy Ritchie movies and the missions are as fun as leaning up against a wall to regain health. Oh. You actually have to do that.

A sequel followed, subtitled *Black Monday*, but by then no one cared and a promising project collapsed under its own weight.



BACKTRACKING

ACCORDING TO PLAYSTATION 'RUMBLE'S A LAST-GEN feature: 'Hey, everybody, now we're putting rumble in! Don't worry about what we said before, eh! Woo! Forget that Sixaxis crap that we told you was amazing! Now it's DualShock 3 all the way! BRAPPPPPPPPP'



RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



XIII

CEL-SHADED SHOOTER that was pretty enjoyable in its day, we're just not sure we'd want to plough through it again. Its style means that it's aged very well over the years, but... nah. A sequel, on the other hand, we'd definitely get involved with.



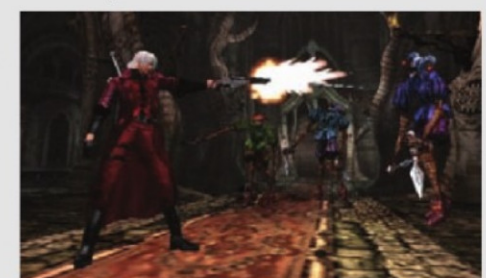
Onimusha

ONIMUSHA WAS JUST like *Resident Evil*! Except it had swords in it instead of guns and also featured historical figures from Japanese culture! It must have been the greatest game ever made! It was pretty good! But the sequel was even better! So we'll just play that again instead! Sorry!



Ridge Racer

THE GAME THAT sold the world on the power of PlayStation is still a good laugh to this day, but we've sadly outgrown the joys of flinging a sports car around a track and having The Fun, but we prefer to drive a small hatchback around in *GT5*. Yay.



Devil May Cry

OKAY, SO THIS was actually very good as well. Who could forget the old classic uppercut-sword-swing to midair twin pistol blasting? No one. But *Devil May Cry 3* is just so much better, we always find ourselves gravitating towards that. Oh well.



Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes

PRICE: £17.99 **SOUND:** TBC **DIRECTOR:** Rupert Wyatt **STARRING:** James Franco, Andy Serkis, Freida Pinto

THIS ONE WINS the award for 'Year's Biggest Film We Expected To Hate But Really Enjoyed'. We were ready for a ridiculous film about a San Francisco besieged by a bunch of apes, but in actuality enjoyed an intelligent thriller about rebellion, uprising and liberation. The visual effects that have been employed to bring super-intelligent ape Caesar to life are to be

commended – not quite human, not quite monkey, but a fusion of the two that's utterly convincing. It's thanks too to Andy Serkis, who's probably the first actor to be considered for an Oscar for playing a monkey. A smart and interesting prequel, we were happy to be proved wrong by *Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes*.

RATING: ★★★★★



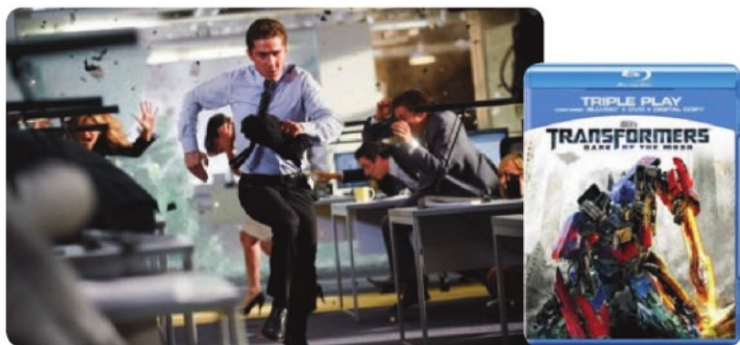
The Inbetweeners Movie

PRICE: £15.99 **SOUND:** TBC **DIRECTOR:** Ben Palmer **STARRING:** Simon Bird, James Buckley, Blake Harrison, Joe Thomas

THE CLOSEST BRIT comedy cinema has come to making its own *Superbad*. *The Inbetweeners Movie* manages to deftly extend the television show's unashamedly puerile sense of humour from 30 minutes to three times that length without feeling overlong or meandering. The jokes come thick and fast, although laugh-out-loud, tears-in-your-eyes moments

occur only a few times throughout. There's also an underlying sense of awkwardness – and not the funny kind – that comes from the script's attempts to make Will, Simon, Neil and Jay's holiday a coming-of-age story rather than just a bunch of sex jokes. It's when the film just sticks to showing four hopeless idiots being hopeless idiots that it's at its best.

RATING: ★★★★★



Transformers 3: Dark Of The Moon

PRICE: £14.99 **SOUND:** Dolby TrueHD 7.1 **DIRECTOR:** Michael Bay **STARRING:** Shia LaBeouf, John Turturro, Josh Duhamel

WE'RE GOING TO be honest; we had very little idea about what was going on during this third entry into Michael Bay's explosion porn series. If there was a plot we didn't notice it, perhaps because it was so inane our brains refused to register it. Basically this is just another Michael Bay cash cow created to blow the crap out of

things and generate billions of dollars in profit – narrative, interesting characters or any kind of depth are barely considered in attaining that goal, replaced instead by shiny cars and hundreds of explosions. Still, those shiny cars really are shiny and the explosions are very exciting.

RATING: ★★★★★



● Hugo Weaving is great fun as the Red Skull – a character that requires no nuance whatsoever – but it's Tommy Lee Jones as Colonel Chester Phillips who steals the show.

Captain America: The First Avenger

The First Avenger, last of the pre-Avengers films



PSN PRICE: £15.99 **SOUND:** DTS-HD Master Audio 7.1 **DIRECTOR:** Joe Johnston **STARRING:** Chris Evans, Hayley Atwell, Hugo Weaving

Marvel Studios head Avi Arad once said, "The biggest opportunity with *Captain America* is as a man 'out of time,' coming back

today, looking at our world through the eyes of someone who thought the perfect world was small-town America. Sixty years go by, and who are we today? Are we better?"

Sounds like an interesting concept, right? Well, that's not the film Marvel decided to make, instead opting to create an old-fashioned, *Indiana Jones*-esque *Boy's Own* adventure romp, relegating the unthawing of Captain America in the modern day to two short narrative bookends. Not that that's such a terrible choice. Setting *Captain America* in the Forties gives the superhero movie template a fresh twist, much like *X-Men: First Class* did by framing its action as a Sixties spy flick. Still, the result is a simplistic, one-dimensional action film that could have been much more.

Strangely, it's the first half of the film – a slow and pacey telling of Steve Rogers' transformation from weedy nerd into beefed-up superhero – that fares better than its action-packed, set piece-driven second half.

The special effects that transform Chris Evans into a 90-pound punching bag are undeniably impressive, although somewhat creepy (his oversized 30-year-old head appears to have been transplanted onto the body of a 12-year-old boy), and the film's own bit of

fiction – that Captain America was originally a propagandist comic-book superhero conceived to sell war bonds – is a neat idea that works well.

It's in the second half when some of *Captain America*'s muscle turns into fat. A big prison break is just the first of several run-of-the-mill showdowns that don't manage to come across as exciting – Captain America somehow manages to make zip lining onto a moving train and battling robot laser Nazis feel tiresome.

Part of the problem is Steve Rogers himself; he's certainly no Tony Stark. Chris Evans' good guy with a big heart shtick is altogether less entertaining than Robert Downey Jr's insouciant cool or Chris Hemsworth's fish-out-of-water acting in *Thor*. He's good at looking chiselled and attractive, though, so there's that at least.

But that's the problem with *Captain America* as a whole. It's handsome, charming and fun, but also unapologetically one-dimensional and corny. A better film could have been made here, but we expect the more interesting aspects of Captain America's character development are being saved for *The Avengers* next year.

VERDICT

Captain America commendably manages not to be two hours of 'America is great!' jingoism, and the Forties setting and adventure genre setup provide a welcome twist to the superhero flick. However, a lack of imagination in set pieces and development in character keep *Captain America* from being great.

RATING: ★★★★★

Movies that should be videogames

David Bowie in a videogame? Yes, please.



Labyrinth

WOULD LABYRINTH ACTUALLY make a good videogame? We're not really sure, but as soon as we remembered the image of David Bowie prancing around with a bunch of drunken muppets and singing *Magic Dance* we knew we had to write something about it. Just look at Bowie up there. He looks mental.

How would a game work? It would probably play something like *Alice: Madness Returns*, except every time you solve a puzzle or make your way a little further into the labyrinth there's a brief musical interlude from Bowie himself. In fact, now that we write that we think it should happen in every game. Every level in *Modern Warfare*

3 could end with Bowie singing a song about Captain Price in the style of *Let's Dance*.

We're really stretching here. A *Labyrinth* videogame would be utter pants. We just wanted to put a picture of David Bowie in the magazine. Deal with it.

Terrible videogame movie of the month

IN AN INTERVIEW Maggie Q likened this chunk of film vomit to *Fight Club*. Let us tell you, saying *King Of Fighters* is like *Fight Club* is like saying a plate of snot is like a sirloin steak. *King Of Fighters* is released near the end of December. Consider this fair warning.



Classic Blu-ray

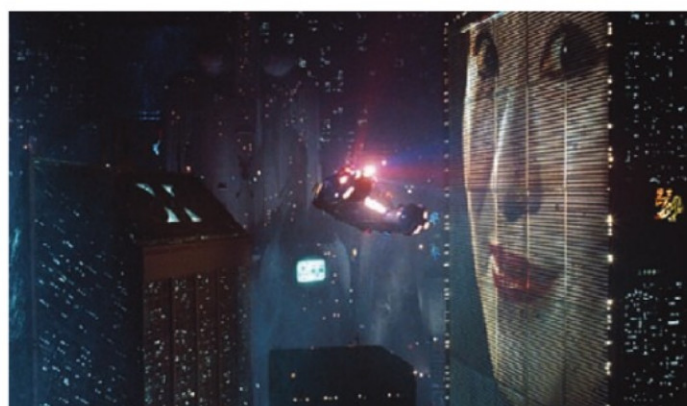
Fantastic Blu-rays you need to have in your collection

#11 Blade Runner

Price: £9.99 **Sound:** Dolby TrueHD 5.1 **Director:** Ridley Scott **Starring:** Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young

WE WERE GOING to feature *Take That: Progress Live* this month, but then we realised its themes of humanity and the nature of the soul aren't quite as deep as those in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. As such we thought we'd run with that instead.

Despite a protracted and troubled production, *Blade Runner* still ended up one of the greatest films ever made. Blending film noir with sci-fi to fantastic effect, all of its elements worked in perfect harmony – the perpetual nighttime of Los Angeles circa 2019; the ambience of the synth-led soundtrack by Vangelis; the cold nature of the replicants, revealed to be altogether less sinister during Rutger Hauer's famous, and partly improvised, speech at the film's end. It all comes together to make for a film that's not just entertaining but utterly entrancing.



Following on from *Alien*, *Blade Runner* was Ridley Scott's second genre-defining movie in the space of three years. Recently he's been making nonsense like *Kingdom Of Heaven* and *Robin Hood*. Let's hope that next year's *Prometheus* sees a return to the kind of filmmaking that made *Blade Runner* such a classic piece of cinema.



Movie vehicles we want to see in Gran Turismo 5

If we could combine our favourite racing game with these vehicles we'd be very happy indeed



DeLorean Time Machine

WHILE WE WOULD love to race the DeLorean in GT5, it would be a bit awkward if you hit 88mph and suddenly found yourself speeding through Victorian England.



Mad Max Interceptor

BECAUSE DRIVING A modified 1973 XB GT Ford Falcon Coupe makes you look f***ing cool.



Batmobile Tumbler

THE ABILITY TO drive over other racers would surely be beneficial, as would the ability to activate stealth mode (or what most people who aren't Batman just call 'not driving under a spotlight').



Bumblebee

CHEVROLET CAMAROS ARE cool. Transforming into a giant robot and smashing up the opposition: also cool.

PLAY# Playlist

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

GAME UNDER

Stock photography, fictitious stories, real lives...



Play is now available in these fine locations...

On cassette tape!



On specially branded huskies!



In a life-giving creamy paste!



On this sign!



In earth's ionosphere!

PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
More than enough additions to take the Assassin's Creed formula into modern classic territory.		
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Rocksteady's sequel to the excellent Arkham Asylum is a serious contender for game of the year.		
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.		
Bayonetta*	187	93%
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz!: Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%

game	issue	score
Treyarch's first genuinely brilliant entry to the series and a standard-bearer for fast-paced online shooters.		
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Cars 2	208	68%
Catherine*	204	48%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	204	72%
Damnation	181	38%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Sequel to one of the hardest games in recent times, Dark Souls is another superb release from developer From Software.		
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
The point where the Dead Space series stepped up and became something to be genuinely excited about.		
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Worries: unfounded. Fun: lots of it. True Deus Ex experience: confirmed. Boss battles: bloody awful.		
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
DiRT 3	206	85%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
It's just like playing Guitar Hero for the first time all over again, although DJ Hero is slightly more expensive.		
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%

game	issue	score
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
F.E.A.R. 3	208	60%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.		
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
God Of War III	190	88%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Two fine expansions bundled together and without the need for GTA IV to play them. What more could you want.		
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero III is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!		
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Saints Row: The Third **PS3**
 Dark Souls **PS3**
 Dead Rising 2: Off The Record **PS3**
 Child Of Eden **PS3**
 Supremacy MMA **PS3**
 Batman: Arkham City **PS3**
 X-Men Destiny **PS3**
 NBA 2K12 **PS3**
 Ace Combat: Assault Horizon **PS3**
 WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship **PS3**

88% F1 2011 **PS3** 71%
 90% Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One **PS3** 68%
 61% The Cursed Crusade **PS3** 40%
 80% Phineas And Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension **PS3** 66%
 40% Rage **PS3** 60%
 94% BloodRayne: Betrayal **PSN** 62%
 35% From Dust **PSN** 82%
 88% Renegade Ops **PSN** 78%
 78% Burnout Crash **PSN** 79%
 63% Resident Evil Code Veronica X **PSN** 72%

game	issue	score
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
 It will certainly split opinion, but we absolutely love it. A valuable addition to the wonderful world of gaming.		
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Homefront	203	69%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD	210	94%
 Largely ignored when they were first released, gamers can now enjoy these wonderful games in brilliant HD.		
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
Jane Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
L.A. Noire	206	91%
 Not perfect but Rockstar's new IP introduces pioneering facial-capture technology and interesting gameplay.		
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
 An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff.		
Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	175	52%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%

game	issue	score
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
 Why the hell are you reading this when you should be playing <i>Mass Effect 2</i> instead? GO GO GO.		
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
 Not the final <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
 A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.		
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
 The best kart racer by far on the PlayStation 3, but combined with incredible levels of creativity. If you love <i>LBP</i> you'll love this, too.		
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
Moto GP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
MX Vs ATV: Alive	206	42%
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
nail'd	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
 <i>Hot Pursuit</i> is one of the best arcade racers of all time - pure, unadulterated bliss in game form.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%

game	issue	score
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Portal 2	205	95%
 Another exceptional realisation from Valve, gamers are going to be talking about <i>Portal 2</i> for a long time to come.		
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
 Relocates the familiar <i>GTA</i> formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
 With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, <i>Resistance 2</i> is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
 With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK 2011	206	70%

*denotes import review

PLAY'S DIARY



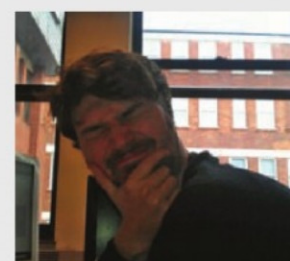
DAY 4 This month has seen an increase in Steve Burns's level of fury. What began as a humorous and jovial few digs at the state of the modern gaming industry soon became a cause for concern for the Play team.



DAY 12 Less than two weeks into the issue it became clear there was only one thing for it: total ignorance. The team would have to steer clear of Burns's furious gaze, instead training their eyes on other things, like Dan.



DAY 16 A few days of relative quiet passed before Burns's fury reared its ugly head again. Apparently ignorance couldn't help us avoid it. A reign of around two weeks of furious fury was about to begin. Furiously.



DAY 28 But yeah, then we just realised if we took his hat off that said 'Fury' on it, Burns's fury would dissipate. Hard as it is to understand here, he actually looks 'happy', and not just 'utterly terrifying'.

GUILTY PLEASURES HOMEFRONT

THQ, 2011, 69%, PLAY 203



So yes, it turned out that *Homefront* wasn't that great. And yes, it turned out that most of you, the reading public, thought it was a big pile of pump. But some of us don't actually think it's that bad.



Admittedly it is rather uninspired, po-faced tosh. Yes, it's short. It's blind, nationalistic nonsense. It's basic and the sort of thing you see in every other shooter of all time ever (in the last few years). But there's something about it.



And that something is one John Milius – writer of *Red Dawn* and *Conan The Barbarian*, making him one of the best writers ever when you ask the **Play** team. How could it be anything other than brilliant with him involved?



Granted, it's just *Red Dawn* 2 with less Patrick Swayze. And granted it's one big pile of ham-fisted attempts to make you react emotionally. And granted it's just jingoistic nonsense. But none of that matters because... like... *Red Dawn* was funny.

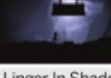


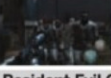
So yes, the game itself is bland and basic. Short and throwaway. But it was written by the guy who Walter Sobchak from *The Big Lebowski* was based on, meaning it's amazing in every conceivable way. Fact.

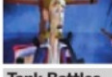
game	issue	score
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for Colin McRae. Not much in it, really.		
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	169	94%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Just beating <i>Blur</i> to the chequered flag, <i>Split/Second</i> is a wonderfully intense racing game in the <i>Burnout</i> mould.		
Sports Champions	196	83%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made.		
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Tekken 6	184	94%
There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, <i>nothing</i> , stops <i>Tekken 6</i> from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, <i>Oblivion</i> is an awesome game.		
The Fight	199	42%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The Orange Box	161	93%
The Saboteur	187	67%
The Shoot	199	76%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%

game	issue	score
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Classics Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
<i>Undisputed</i> is gorgeous to look at, it's incredibly deep, and it's one of the most addictive fighters we've played in ages.		
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
<i>Among Thieves</i> has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.		
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
A brilliant surprise from the developer of <i>Bayonetta</i> and easily one of the best games we've played in 2010.		
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WSC Real 11	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011	199	63%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yoostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%

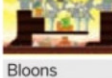
game	issue	score
1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Classic, frantic and utterly brilliant arcade action from Sega. A fine example of what the company is best known for.		
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i> . Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
It doesn't have <i>MW2</i> 's polish but it's a great game both as a slice of history and in its own right.		
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3 Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
This is yet another beautiful, cute and high-class puzzler on the PSN that works perfectly and is a joy to play.		
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Cubixx HD	207	76%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%

game	issue	score
Droplitz	184	91%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome II	202	83%
echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	170	45%
Explodemon	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
	This scrolling-fighter classic from 1989 makes an almost faultless appearance on PSN. Stick it on your download list.	
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
	Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.	
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
fiOw	151	90%
	Another 90% game for the PS3, another lesson in simple, addictive gameplay. fiOw is an innovative title available on the Network.	
Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
From Dust	211	82%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
G-Police	27	84%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
	Simply put, Joe Danger is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.	
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
	Lara is back to her best in The Guardian Of Light. Tomb Raider fans will love it and for just £9.99 everyone else should, too.	
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Limbo	209	90%
	We had to wait a while, but just like with Braid it in no way negatively impacts the quality of what is just that – a quality experience.	
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	70%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%

game	issue	score
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Medal Of Honor: Frontline	210	52%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
	While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.	
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge Special Edition	195	94%
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive	205	42%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numbblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
	Bold, bright, insanely addictive – this re-imagining of the retro classic is an essential addition to anybody's PSN library.	
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
	If you like challenges, shooting, pixels and junk, then this combines all four of those and adds in several splashes of style as well.	
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimension	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
	One of the best games ever made comes to PSN. Unfortunately it also brings with it a rather high price tag.	
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
	This is even better than the first episode due to the fact it has better puzzles and even funnier dialogue.	
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
Section 8	193	78%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic 4: Episode One	199	82%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%

game	issue	score
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
	The best version of one of the best fighting games ever released, or something. We don't know, mainly because Ryan isn't writing this.	
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
	Telltale Games' excellent modern addition to the Monkey Island franchise finally sees the light of day on PSN. Go pick it up.	
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
The Baconing	210	72%
The Last Guy	171	91%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition	195	92%
	LucasArts' classic point-and-click adventure gets an HD makeover and will hopefully be the first of many classics heading to PSN.	
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%
Under Siege	207	71%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
WipeOut	01	89%
WipeOut HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Worms	179	91%
	There's a reason Worms is still going strong, and that's because people never get tired of its fun personality and addictive gameplay.	
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Yar's Revenge	206	57%
Zuma	182	78%

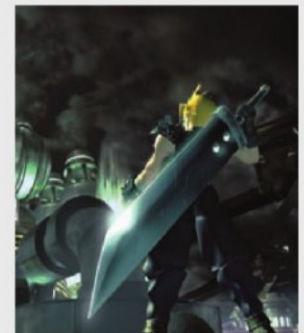
PSP mini LISTING

A Space Shooter For Two Bucks	202	55%
Alien Havoc	186	68%
Angry Birds	202	93%
	Flinging birds at stuff for four times the price of the original in a less-functional fashion than before has never been so much fun.	
Bloons	186	65%
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	186	45%
Edge	202	85%
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	186	57%
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero Of Sparta	186	57%
I Must Run!	202	70%
Kahoots	186	88%
NOVA: Near Orbit Vanguard Alliance	202	63%
Pinball Fantasies	186	90%
	Pinball Fantasies was originally released on the Amiga and features four tables and some excellent pinball gaming.	

DID YOU KNOW?



THE ORIGINAL PS2 was intended to play Betamax video cassettes, as evidenced by this little-known rear slot on the back of the fat console. Just another one of Sony's attempts to get its failed proprietary recording technologies some mass-market acceptance.



IF YOU PLAY Final Fantasy VII for 462 hours exactly you will achieve a state of transcendence. If only the Dalai Lama knew this, he wouldn't have had to waste his life being 'nice' and stuff. Poor bloke.

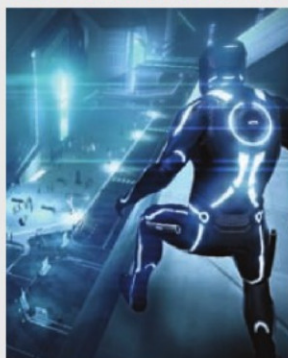


IF YOU WERE to lay every copy of PS2 cult classic Bujingai sold in the UK end to end it would stretch literally one metre. Take into account European sales and the distance would be pushing the 1.5m mark.



INSERTING TWO AA batteries into a nectarine creates a device capable of charging a DualShock 3 pad to at least 63 per cent of its battery capacity. We don't understand the science, but it's said to be something about the 'citrusy deliciousness'.

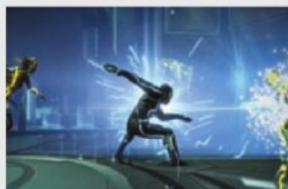
GARY MCTRUTH'S WORLD OF RECOMMENDATIONS **TRON EVOLUTION**



You know the future, yeah? It's a place where people look like Jeff Bridges and wear neon stuff – basically it's like a cold night out in Bognor (the best place for a night out ever). Also it's like *Tron Evolution*.



But *Tron Evolution* isn't just the greatest representation of Bognor/the future ever committed to code – it's one of the best games of recent years (and the future!), too! As usual, though, you have a bunch of detractors in the shape of Play.



Back in an issue from The Past, the idiots at Play decided to award 'Tron Evolution: The Game Of The Film' a pathetic score of 17%. Why? Because they don't want you to have fun, that's why. Soulless whelps.



Alas, it is true. But there is nothing I can do to change Play – I can only recommend the game to you as being brilliant and definitely not rubbish at all. Definitely not. Oh no. Not *Tron*. *cough*



game	issue	score
Puzzle Scape	186	75%
Sky Force	202	68%
Tetris	186	93%
How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.		
Vempire	186	67%
Who's That Flying?!	202	64%

PSP LISTING



300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bomberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core – Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	187	66%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA 11	198	69%
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Gladiator Begins	206	52%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%

*denotes import review

game	issue	score
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman!	186	73%
What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
LocoRoco	143	94%
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
Medieval Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
A fantastic entry in the Metal Gear Solid series and one of the best games on PSP. Wonderful.		
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes	205	84%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
Moon Diver	205	46%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patapon 3	205	81%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoLoRoiS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Red Faction: Battlegrounds	205	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%

game	issue	score
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable	206	78%
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
Slam Bolt Scrappers	204	73%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights are as hectic and solid as ever.		
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Swarm	204	78%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play. Tekken 6 is the best game of the series on PSP.		
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	153	64%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
The Godfather Mob Wars	136	66%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	137	71%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord? 2	192	78%
WipeOut Pulse	159	86%
WipeOut Pure	138	91%
Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld WipeOut game could be. Pure is an essential PSP purchase.		
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%



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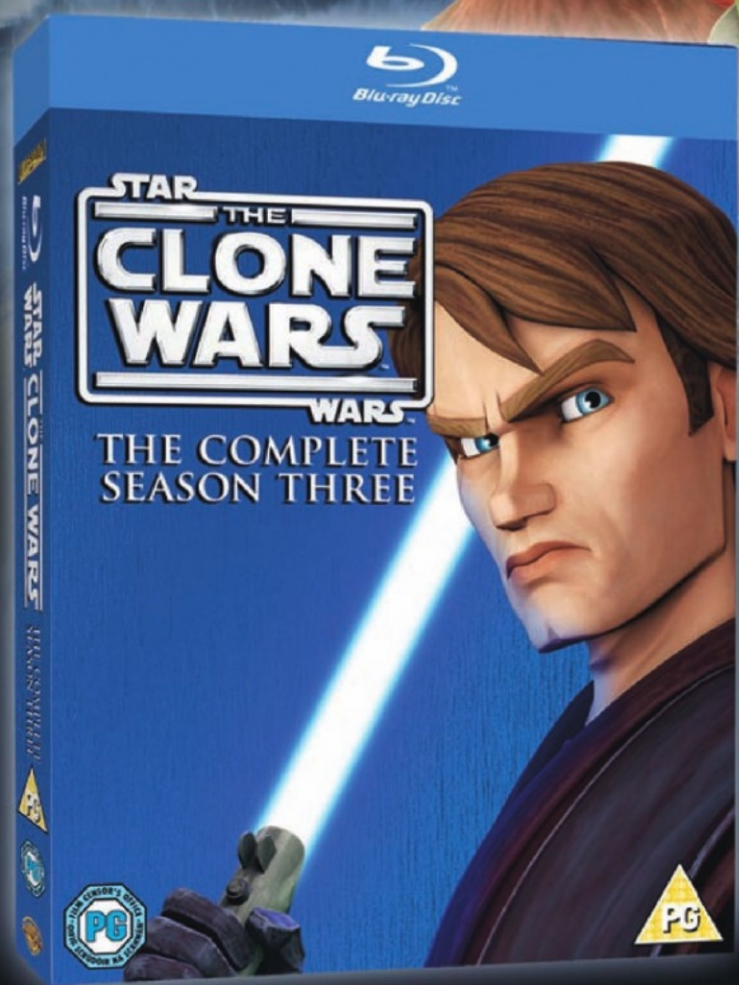
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